

OLD AFRICA UNTAMED



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CHAPTER ONE

OLD AFRICA

I

IF you love Old Africa and the last outposts, there is a long, hard trek before you. Such a trek as I have just made, from Cape Town to Ovamboland. It will be worth the struggle. Old Africa is there with face unchanged, the most bewitching scene on earth.

This far corner called Ovamboland will give you the atmosphere of *Sanders of the River* in real life. You will meet men like Allen Quartermain. And even now you may encounter danger that will set your heart pounding and sharpen all your senses. Take foolish risks there, and you leave your bones in the high yellow grass and the sand.

Officials posted to Ovamboland usually have to look at the map. No accurate map of the country has ever been drawn, but the atlas will reveal an outline of the most northerly territory influenced (one cannot say governed) by the Union of South-Africa. It is roughly two-thirds the size of Ireland.

While the Germans ruled South-West Africa, they never penetrated Ovamboland, and no one who was not a missionary was permitted to enter. Only in 1915, at the request of the Ovambos themselves, did the Union Government send officials and grant its protection: Since then cannibalism and torture, rain sacrifices and wars have been discouraged by wise resident commissioners. He would be a bold man who would say that such savagery will not occur again, though it would not go unpunished. Meanwhile the one hundred and twenty thousand people of Ovamboland till the sandy fields peacefully in a world of their own - a world which would survive if Europe perished.

Before I set out from Windhoek for Ovamboland I consulted the man who knows the Ovambos better than any other living person. He is Major C. H. L. Hahn, M.B.E. (grandson of the missionary-explorer who travelled in the territory), and present Native Commissioner. Major Hahn went to South-West Africa with the invading army in 1914. He has been in Ovamboland for twenty-three years, and I do not think he would enjoy a transfer. Deeply

suntanned, with dark, greying hair, Major Hahn gives an instant impression of vigour. The Ovambos called him *Shongola*, which means sjambok. As he does not use a sjambok to maintain law and order, it is obvious that *Shongola* is the native description of the man himself - as strong and lively as a rawhide whip. I asked him whether there was anything that made the Ovambos stand out from other tribes.

"They are the oldest settled people in Africa," replied Major Hahn. "For five centuries at least the Ovambos have been in possession of their land. The Zulus on the other side of South-Africa are newcomers compared with their cousins, the Ovambos. So that in Ovamboland, especially in the heathen kraals, you will see a people living almost exactly as their ancestors lived before the white man came."

It is not easy to secure a permit to enter Ovamboland, and when I read the document I found a formidable list of prohibitions. I could not trade or 'interfere with the natives,' or take a dog with me. I must not cause a grass fire. I was instructed about carrying sufficient petrol, water,

and food, and told that I must find shelter for myself. But when I learnt that my rifle was to be sealed before leaving the 'police zone,' I pleaded for meat for the pot. (It is unwise to point out that travellers to Ovamboland have been mauled by leopards and lions, because, in the official view, no unprovoked wild beast has ever attacked a man).

A high official considered the case. Next day he gave the verdict.

"I have been going into your problem of meat," he declared. gravely. "At Ondonga there is an interpreter. I suggest that his influence with Chief Martin and the headmen will enable you to procure - to purchase, that is to say - a goat."

I dared not glance at the faces of the friends who were to accompany me on this goat-eating expedition. Useless to point out that a German prince had previously been granted permission to shoot an elephant, whereas we asked only for guinea fowl or buck. The goat, and methods of preparing it for the table, became a topic that lightened the drive into the north. If we had not later encountered the memorable hospitality of

white men and women in lonely places, we might really have been forced to procure - that is to say, to purchase - a goat! With the influence, of course, of the interpreter.



THE AUTHOR IN CAMP ON ONE OF HIS EXPEDITIONS
INTO THE WILDERNESS OF SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

It was the dry season, but Ondonga was not reached without an effort. There was a day when the car covered only 50 miles, and we slept

beside it, too exhausted to flick off the mosquitoes. One incident showed that we had passed beyond the 'police zone' into a wild country. All spare water for the boiling radiator had been used, and we were searching the track ahead anxiously for signs of natives. I saw a dark form moving in the bush, and raised an arm. The man hesitated. I held out tobacco. If I had walked towards him he would have taken cover. Now he came forward shyly. He was naked; he held a bow and arrow; and when I gave him a cigarette he did not know how to light it. A fair test of a savage, I think. Soon he was joined by two wondering companions. When I made gestures of drinking they brought water from a muddy pool. Possibly they were Bushmen, for they spoke a language of clicks and grunts but in appearance they were unlike any Bushmen I had seen previously. With this and other weird assistance, we came at last to the thatched houses of Ondonga, headquarters of Major Hahn.

Ondonga is the most remote official settlement in South-West Africa. During the rainy season, it would be hard to find, anywhere in

Africa, a more isolated outpost. Donkey wagons and camels are still used, when the road is impassable for motor-lorries, to carry freight and mails from railhead at Tsumeb. Lions attack the tasty donkeys, and an English missionary told me that he had lost seven on one journey. Motor-lorries are often long delayed. In 1934 the white exiles of Ovamboland received their Christmas letters in April and their parcels in June.

For these reasons, and others, Ondonga has been made a 'six months station' for certain officials. Nearly all stay longer at their own request. Very soon the newcomer meets every white person on the station. Major Hahn has two administrative assistants at Ondonga; there is the district surgeon and a plague inspector; a postmaster-wireless operator, and beyond the official area are the concession store-keepers, a labour recruiting manager, and the missionaries.

Seventy miles farther on, at Oshikongo - 'port of entry' from Angola - lives an assistant native commissioner and his family. There are no more white people in the territory; settlers are not

allowed in Ovamboland. I know few other areas in Africa where the white population is so small.

Though Ondonga lies well within the tropics, water is the main difficulty during the rainless winter. Drinking water must be collected in large tanks and rationed. Baths are filled with a dark and dubious salty mixture from holes and pools. Both water and milk are regarded as dangerous, and many families use tinned milk only.

The homes of Ondonga are far more comfortable than the dwellings one might expect in such a wilderness. Furniture is transported at government expense. Almost everyone has a radio set and a refrigerator burning paraffin. Houses are built of raw mud bricks baked in the sun, which means frequent crumbling, collapse, and rebuilding. White ants attack the woodwork, and at last destroy it. But while these houses stand, they suit the climate. Poles and slats of tambuti wood support the ceilings. Then there are layers of sacking to keep out the dust, palm leaves soaked in arsenic to defeat the ants, a mud covering six inches deep to shut out the heat, and finally a heavy thatch of corn stalks. Large

spiders are encouraged to live in every room, feeding on mosquitoes.

Catering, among the white community, is a problem often solved with the aid of rifles and cans. Duck may be shot nearby, and springbok on the plains to the south. The thin Ovambo chicken, costing three pence, is no luxury; though two thousand chickens are mournfully consumed in Ondonga every year.

A German who tried to grow vegetables kept an account of his expenditure, and found that he could produce tomatoes at 5 Pounds apiece. Potatoes may be obtained from Tsumeb, but the freight rate is 12s 6d per 100 lb. It is necessary to look well ahead when sending for supplies - a child's cot, ordered by telegram, arrived four months later.

So it cannot be denied that Ondonga is isolated. People who have not the right temperament find they are going 'bush balmy,' to use the local phrase. The Germans, far from their pleasant beer gardens, sometimes declare they have had a 'nose full' of the country. Parents with young children dread illnesses and

wonder how the education problem will be solved. Only the children are care-free. They learn the Ovambo language rapidly, and I heard a father call upon his five-year-old son at lunch one day to settle the pronunciation of a word.



HEADQUARTERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AT ONDONGUA,
OVAMBOLAND

The stranger finds it difficult to make himself understood. Once a South-African visitor wished to talk to a Portuguese official from Angola. He

spoke in Afrikaans to an Ovambo who had learnt Afrikaans while working in the south. The Ovambo then translated the words to another native who spoke Ovambo and Portuguese. The conversation lasted a long time, but business was done.

Finnish missionaries learn Ovambo before they leave Finland. You may wonder why men and women preachers and doctors are to be found in a land so different from their own cold Finland. Hahn, the missionary, after his return to Europe, pleaded the needs of the Ovambos before many mission societies. The Finns listened with sympathy, and for seventy years these simple, indomitable people have laboured in a country of war and famine and plague. Their methods have not always fitted the official policy. But everyone must admire the medical help, the well organized hospitals given by the Finns to tribes suffering from the most painful diseases of the tropics. These bearded men and plainly dressed, toiling medical women can be proud of their record in Ovamboland.

"For twelve months during the Great War we were cut off from the world, "Mr. Alho, head of the mission, told me. "No letters, no supplies, no money. We lived on the country as best we could, without coffee or sugar or groceries. Many missionaries became ill. But the hospitals remained open, the teaching went on."

Patients are never turned away. They arrive with their families and food supplies, and all are housed by the mission. Thus, apart from doctors and nurses, no hospital staff is needed - the relatives do the work. About a hundred patients are treated every day at the Ondonga mission alone. Many come in suffering from burns, the result of rolling over into the fire while asleep or drunk.

"Take a knife and cut out the pain," an Ovambo will say to the mission doctors. "I am not a child. If I cry out, do not listen."

A woman doctor told me that she once spent a strenuous hour extracting a tooth. At the end the Ovambo remarked:

"I am sorry to have given all this trouble - your arms must be tired."

In the early days these Finns risked their lives when they settled among the Ovambos. Stations were burnt, missionaries fled - and boldly returned. As recently as 1917, when the crops failed, they saw the roads piled high with skeletons. Famine rations from the south were held up for six weeks by floods. The people waited and died.

One of the mission's first converts, an Ovambo girl, was taken to Finland and baptized there, (The Finns are Lutherans.) She learnt to speak Finnish, a queer contrast with her own Bantu language.

Other missions in Ovamboland are not so well supported as the old Finnish stations. I called on Father Tobias at St. Mary's, the Anglican Mission in the Ukuanyama tribal area, and found him decorating his church with beans, pumpkins, corn, and millet for the harvest festival. Much has been done at St. Mary's with slender resources. Mrs. Tobias, formerly a London hospital sister, manages the mission hospital.

There, too, I met Mr. MacDonald, a Yorkshire man and a remarkable mechanic. Six years ago Mr. MacDonald was running a motor garage in Leeds. By chance he attended a missionary meeting, heard for the first time of the Ovamboland enterprise, and offered his services. The skilled volunteer was accepted, and now he has gained a great reputation as a mechanical expert in Ovamboland. His workshop, built up with broken down engines, scraps, and oddments, turns out furniture of professional quality. In the wilds, where spare parts are unobtainable, he revives antiquated and wrecked motor cars. No repair is beyond his ingenuity. Mr. MacDonald once covered the 200 miles from Tsumeb to the mission during the rainy season in six weeks. There were days when a run of half a mile in swamp and mud ranked as an achievement.

Such is Ovamboland, with steppes of high yellow grass, the marula trees giving their dead black shade, mopani trees and belt of palms, wild figs and patches of cultivation. There are no hills, and hardly a stone, within the borders. A

meteorite, falling there, was taken to a chief's kraal and worshipped; and a professor, who heard of the find and went to study it, narrowly escaped execution.

I have shown a little of the lives of the white people, under their thatch and behind their netted verandas, in Ovamboland. Now enter the stockaded kraal of a headman and see how the self supporting Ovambos rule and nourish themselves.

II

"Kaluvi is your father. If there is trouble, go first to him. If Kaluvi cannot make you happy, go to the council of headmen. From them you may come to me, for I am also your father. The road to Oshikongo is an open road."

Thus the white official spoke before Kaluvi, the headman, and the wise men of the tribe in a great kraal in Ovamboland. The interpreter, gesticulating, rapped out the white man's words. Old Kaluvi, shrewd face attentive, shaven head nodding, made patterns in the sand where he squatted at our feet.

It was my first experience of an Ovambo indaba. By happy chance the official, stationed at Oshikongo among the Ukuanyama tribe, was returning a ceremonial visit soon after I arrived.

Here was the real African scene - a land still ruled by tribal law, with the guidance of alert and experienced officials as the last resort. Among the headmen was an old fellow with wrinkled, humorous face, Wanja by name. Wanja brought memories of the Ovamboland of twenty years ago; for he had fought in Mandume's bodyguard, and Mandume was a despot as cruel as Chaka.

The voices droned on. "My eyes and ears are kept open by the headmen," I heard. But I still gazed at Wanja, wondering what he had seen in the days of Mandume's blood-lust...

"Prisoners must die." Mandume has spoken and the hired Bushmen executioners step forward and drag the captives out to strangle them.

Sometimes Mandume spared their lives, but forced the prisoners to roast meat, held in their

hands, over charcoal fires. He mutilated those who came before him for punishment, and once he threatened his own mother with death.

Yet this Mandume was well-liked by his people on both sides of the frontier. (The Ovambos recognize no boundary signs). He fell out with the Portuguese, fought them, and was driven south out of Angola. From the British side he raided cattle in Portuguese territory, robbed, and murdered.

Then Mandume made a fatal mistake. He approached a British official noisily and impudently, with armed followers, as a menace. Major Manning, then Native Commissioner, sent a runner to the nearest telegraph office: 'Position is now serious and absolutely necessary to dispatch a force powerful enough quickly to crush opposition and completely establish authority.'

Mandume was invited to surrender. He sent a message: 'If the English want me I am here, and they can come and fetch me here. I am a man, not a woman, and I will fight till my last bullet is gone.'

So the punitive expedition reached Mandume's country in February 1917. The men were going down fast with malaria, horses were dying daily. But a battle followed, and Mandume was killed by Maxim fire.

That was Ovamboland within the memory of Major Hahn, who was the expedition's intelligence officer. Bombing planes and armoured cars were up there in 1932; but Chief Ipumbu was removed without casualties. 'A personal affair' they call it in Ovamboland.

"Before, if a man were to visit another one, he had to take with him a knobkerrie and a knife," remarked an Ovambo chief recently. "Today there is no need for weapons. We are satisfied, and we hope the Union Government is as well. We want the Union Government to stay here."

So the natives of Ovamboland are contented in their stockaded kraals. I strolled away from the indaba, with a guide, to see the maze of pointed stakes within which every headman dwells. Every family, as a matter of fact, lives within stockades; but only the larger kraals are

impressive. There are no villages in Ovambo-land. A family cultivates a corn patch, and raises a roughly made circular wooden palisade, often under cover of the grain, about fifteen feet in diameter. Kaluvi's stockade must have been 70 feet in diameter, a labyrinth from which a stranger would not easily emerge. Built mainly for defence in the past, these kraals protect the people and the cattle from lions. It is cool in the narrow corridors. Sandy enclosures are clean, and the whole queer maze is designed with the skill of a professional architect.

The chief or headman has his sleeping hut near the centre, like a thatched beehive with mud plastered walls. Each wife (and I met one headman with seven) is given her own sleeping hut, living-room, kitchen, and grain store. A quiet place, shut off by a double stockade, is reserved for indabas; I saw about a thousand people waiting in a larger enclosure to hear the words of the white official. Aerial views of a large Ovambo kraal show ring after ring of units set aside for wives and men of the bodyguard, servants, and relations; huts for milk and wine, meat and beer; a

store-room for drums and a place for stamping corn; all linked by the intricate system of alleyways. One kraal (at Omedi) covers an area of 36,000 square yards; yet you might miss the place entirely if you did not know where to look. The outer fence of thorn bush, and the fields of corn and millet, camouflage the great stockade.

When I returned to the indaba, it was time for the corn beer to be served, and the roast chickens in pots. I had lunched admirably with the official just before the ceremony; but we had to make a show of pulling a chicken apart. The beer arrived in a huge gourd. It was sampled by a servant, to avoid the risk of poison, and ladled into decorated wooden cups with woven fly covers. I was able to drink half a cup. A teetotal official (if there is one) cannot avoid the ceremony of the beer - one refusal would spoil the party.

As the beer went round the circle of crouching headmen and elders grew larger and more jovial. Kaluvi relaxed, beamed on his supporters, and joked at their expense. The interpreter translated: "These fellows are all about my age. But they walk

with bent backs, their heads sag, they are finished, and I am all right!"

Kaluvi had to allow twelve wives to depart when he became a Christian, and now he has one. In a heathen kraal I met the seven wives of a headman, Naehaemia (a government interpreter), and I learnt about Ovambo women from him. His wives wore ox hide skirts. They were typical of the shapely women of Ovamboland, with figures moulded by work in the fields. A man may go hunting; he may drink beer and visit his friends; certainly he spends half the year amusing himself. The women stamp the corn, carry the water, collect firewood - and live longer than the men.

Yet the Ovambo woman does not regard herself as oppressed. If her husband offends her she can walk out of the kraal with her corn and her belongings and leave him to fend for himself. As each wife puts something into the husband's basket an unpopular man may soon feel hungry. He is forced to send deputations of friends to persuade the haughty women to return. There is no system of lobola (bride payment) in Ovamboland. All inheritance is through the women.

Naehaemia's wives wore copper bangles and ivory charms. One wife displayed the mysterious 'Omiba' shells which are gathered at a secret place on the coast of Angola, and treasured by Ovambo women as though they were diamonds. An 'Omiba' shell is worth 10s. The chief wife had dressed her hair in Ukuanyama fashion, with mud, ochre, fat, and bark, forming a horny crown. (Ombalantu women may be distinguished by enormous plaits of palm fibre, while the Ondongas have long artificial tresses falling to the ground). Most startling of decorations in this parade was a massive anklet, almost as heavy as a convict's leg-iron. There was not one civilized touch about those seven stately women.

Grain harvested by the women must be stored in huge baskets and sealed with mud against white-ants and weevils. There must be a reserve for times of famine. The land is not so productive as other tropical territories, but there are compensations. During the rainy season three-fourths of Ovamboland are flooded, and then little fish are caught by the thousand among

the corn stalks, while larger barbel are found in wells and water-holes.

The marula tree yields a fruit from which strong wine is made. Under a wise tribal law, no man can carry a knife, spear, or club during the marula wine season.

It is more difficult to explain the tribal custom which prevents a chief from crossing the boundaries of his own area. Even men like Mandume respected this tradition. Thus no two chiefs can ever hope to meet. The native commissioner cannot summon all the chiefs of Ovamboland to his headquarters. In the past, a chief sending an invading army into another area was unable to lead his men. When the disobedient Ipumbu fled from the Union forces his followers left him immediately he crossed the tribal boundary. "You are no longer chief," they said.

An old people, the Ovambos. Some authorities declare that they are off shoots of the Zulus, and point to the exact similarity of certain words - nyama (meat) and unvula (rain). Major Hahn has heard a legend that they migrated westwards

from the Zambesi with the Hereros. In the present Ovamboland, the grain loving Ovambos found the soil they sought; while the cattle owning Hereros pushed on southwards in quest of grass. But no legend accounts for the Arab features, the fine noses and un-African eyes which are to be seen so often in Ovamboland. On the strength of these faces, ethnologists have given Egypt as the land of the Ovambos' origin.

They have all the magical beliefs of an ancient, primitive race. "Witch doctors are not flourishing at the moment, but the Ovambos would return to witchcraft readily enough in times of calamity," a missionary told me. "During the great drought of 1928 they killed a child as a sacrifice to the rain goddess; but they crossed the border into Angola for the ceremony."

A man still believes he is bewitched if he has a long illness. All Ovambos fear the dark. There are a thousand omens in the land - comets bring plague, the cooing of a dove near a headman's hut means a death, while a python found across a path is a sign of prosperous days for the owner of cattle.

Ovambo medical skill is not of a high order. A government doctor with nine years' experience of the country told me that he had never discovered a native remedy to compare with the European treatment for the same complaint. (This cannot always be said in other African territories.) He had seen deep cuts sewn up cleverly with palm fibre; but he believed the sun, and not the witchdoctor, saved the patients from sepsis. One Ovambo medicine, I learnt, often proved fatal - the tobacco juice given to sick children.

Similarly the Ovambos possess no great skill with the drums, the 'bush telegraph' that works with such weird efficiency in other corners of Africa. Nevertheless, several types of drums are found, including long, wooden drums with slits, such as I had seen in the Congo.

A heathen headman informed me that drums with a range of about six miles were beaten by hand to announce the death of a chief, the marriage of a chief's daughter, a dance, or the approach of an official. Only a simple message would be understood.

One missionary, lacking a bell, decided to beat the congregation to church with the aid of a drum. He abandoned the idea when native converts told him that the drums were most commonly used to herald a dance; not the sort of dance any missionary would care to attend.

In one or two remote kraals of chiefs and headmen in Ovamboland you may find a fire of green mopani logs smouldering. No man warms himself at this fire, and no woman dares to place a cooking pot over the embers. This is the holy fire of the chief. It is tended by two trustworthy old men, and, though it often burns low, it must be kept alive. From this fire the whole tribe light torches and carry them away to start the fires in their own kraals. Only when the chief dies is the holy fire left unattended. And the fire-sticks are not rubbed again until a new chief comes to rule the tribe.

III

"Guns bring trouble - hand in your guns and I will protect you."

That was the advice given years ago by a lonely white official to the armed native hordes of Ovamboland. And such is the influence of this man, Major C.H.L. Hahn, in the most remote tribal areas in South-West Africa that thousands of treasured guns lie heaped in the armoury. Guns are not unlawful weapons, but they are still handed in voluntarily.

Two thousand guns I saw there one day, each gun with a story lost for ever. Mausers and muskets, Martini-Henrys, Sniders, modern Winchesters and Remingtons - stacked almost to the roof they were, and reeking with the strong meat of African adventure. In this gun-collector's paradise I stared at weapons a century old, and dreamed among them.

War and treacherous ambush, petty feud and dangerous hunt - these guns of the Ovambos had sent bullet and shot whistling over the plains. For nearly eighty years they had played their deadly parts in every phase of the life of a nation. One or two, perhaps,

had once been owned by Sir Francis Galton and the great Andersson, the first white man to set foot in Ovamboland. Those rusty elephant guns - were they ever loaded by Frank Green, or Ericsson the Swede, the bold ivory hunters who rescued Andersson from thirst only to watch him die from fever and wounds.

It is possible to fill in some of the gaps. Those army Mausers bearing the Royal Crown of Portugal; surely they were looted over the frontier in Angola, snatched from dead soldiers when the mud fort was rushed and the garrison massacred. There was unofficial war along this border between Germans and Portuguese in 1915, long before Portugal joined the Allies; and the watchful Ovambos preyed like jackals on the victims. No doubt this German officer's Mauser pistol is a relic of that queer campaign.

But whence came this battered French *chassepot*, a muzzle loader that may have seen the Siege of Paris? And who was Botha? His name, without initials, was carved deeply in the butt of an old-fashioned shotgun. There are many

Bothas in South-Africa, but this must have been a Botha of Voortrekker breed, a forgotten Botha who ventured beyond unknown veld horizons and may be traced now only by his gun. One of those brave spirits, I think, who travelled to Angola with the 'Thirstland Trek' in the seventies. Their wagon tracks are still marked by the heaps of stones where they left their dead.

Martini-Henry carbines are to be found in the armoury by the score, and Major Hahn is still pleased when he receives one. The Martini-Henry block action breech loader gives little trouble, and is thus particularly dangerous in savage hands.

Your skilled Ovambo craftsman, however, is not defeated by a jammed gun. There are metal workers who can make any part and repair any defect. The ill-fated Chief Mandume once captured a small field gun from the Portuguese, with a number of shells. The breech lock was missing, but Mandume set his smiths to work with primitive bellows, anvils, and hammers. A new part was constructed, and after several shots

had been fired the Ovambo breech lock was found to have stood the strain remarkably well.

Tower muskets of hammer and cap design, blunder busses, trade weapons known in West Africa as Dane guns or Adacca guns - all these have found their way into Ovamboland by devious ways. Gun running was a profitable business along the border for many years. The 'smoke traders' carried back ivory in exchange. And as there is no guard along the border the romantic sounding but really sordid traffic still persists on a small scale.

A Dane gun is a flint lock affair of iron with a barrel about 4 feet long, a 1 inch bore, and a terrific kick. Only a reckless man or a hungry native would dare to fire the charge of black powder. It will discharge lead pellets, scrap-iron, stones, or wire-telegraph wire when obtainable. (I have seen guns of this type bearing the date 1760 still in use in Bechuanaland. The stores sell them at 30s. apiece.) When hunting big game with a Dane gun, the sportsman thrusts a poisoned arrow or short spear into the barrel,

stalks his elephant, and fires at point-blank range.

I saw powder horns and native cartridge belts of ox hide in that room; modern cartridges refilled with Ovambo explosives, woodwork carved by Ovambos to fit Lee-Metford and Lee-Enfield barrels, Steyr rifles, Spandaus, every firearm from before Waterloo to the latest sporting rifle. More than six thousand guns have passed through that armoury since Major Hahn has been in Ovamboland. Museums have been generously supplied. Yet the disarmament cannot be complete; there must be guns still hoarded in the outlying kraals of the country.

Peaceful persuasion, as I have said, brought many guns to the armoury. In times of famine Major Hahn has exchanged guns for grain. That system added enormously to the heap in the armoury. The Ovambo is also encouraged to pay his annual head tax of 5s. in corn instead of cash. A store of sixteen thousand bags of corn is now kept in the official granaries, ready for the next famine. But when that calamity descends on the land I am sure the guns of last century will be

taken from their hiding places and the heaps of curio weapons in the armoury will rise still higher.

Game is returning to the settled tribal areas of Ovamboland as a result of disarmament. Before the reduction of firearms huge drives were carried out, and it became necessary to go far a field to shoot gemsbok and springbok, eland and wildebeest. I asked an Ovambo headman how the people would kill elephant without guns. He looked at me in surprise. "In the ordinary way," he replied. "One man creeps up with a special kind of knife and cuts a sinew in the elephant's hind leg. Then the others shoot with poisoned arrows. We track the elephant until it dies."

Francis Galton was probably the first white man to demonstrate firearms to the Ovambos, during his journey in 1851. He declared that the natives ridiculed guns at that time, comparing them unfavourably with arrows. "When we throw an assegai or shoot an arrow, we see it going through the air," they pointed out. "Your guns simply give out fire, and such fire cannot kill."

Galton then took careful aim at a duck and killed it. The natives were frightened. They thought the flash caused death, and could not understand the invisible missile.

They had another and more tragic lesson six years later when they attacked Hahn, the missionary, and Green, the elephant hunter, and were decisively beaten at the 'Battle of Ondonga.' During a running fight that lasted two hours, eleven Ovambos were killed.

Arms were first used by natives in Ovamboland in the sixties of last century. Tribal wars were being waged with axe and assegai. At Ondonga the cunning Chief Shikongo, remembering Green's victory, sent an emissary to seek the help of Hottentots with firearms. When the Hottentots arrived from the south, victory for Shikongo was easy. Having learnt to use firearms, the treacherous Shikongo turned on the little band of Hottentot allies and massacred them. The armed Ondongas soon became the dominating tribe - a position they still hold in these days of disarmament.

Many African natives will take an oath on their guns, just as a Christian holds up the Bible. But the Ovambos are returning to the primitive weapons of the tribe of Old Africa. For them the aloe poisoned arrow, not the automatic rifle. Grandfathers of the tribe, remembering the slaughter before the white man came to protect them, do not regret the change.

CHAPTER TWO

CASTLES IN THE WILDERNESS

I

Namutoni, the great white castle in the wilderness of South-West Africa, is one of the sights of the territory that is too remote for most people to see. Everything beyond Namutoni is 'outside the police zone.' An adventurous spirit, having secured a permit, goes on from there at his own risk - and the risk may be considerable. Beyond Namutoni he will meet Bushmen and other natives who have never seen a white face. He will encounter wild elephants, and he will be

warned (as I was) not to sleep near the favourite waterholes of the lions. If his car breaks down he may die of thirst, and he will not be the first to meet that fate beyond Namutoni.

No wonder the traveller sometimes likes to linger for a while at Namutoni. It is one of a number of castles built by the Germans in South-West Africa - I shall describe others later - and, to my mind, the grandest of them all. The atmosphere of the Foreign Legion clings to its ramparts and towers. Through the loop holes, men have gazed on scenes of desperate adventure and fired into the ranks of attacking Ovambo hordes. Even in recent years, Namutoni has known sudden death. The old castle is now the last outpost of the South-West African Police in the north. Stand in the courtyard and gather the grim story.

Very early this century the Germans wished to establish a place of safety from which they could negotiate with the unconquered Ovambos and recruit labour for the newly opened copper mine at Tsumeb, 75 miles away. The distance may not seem great, but even now a car

journey from Namutoni to Tsumeb, in the rainy season, may take six weeks. For this reason the police sergeant in charge keeps camels in reserve.



WHITE CASTLE IN THE WILDERNESS—THE OLD
GERMAN FORT AT NAMUTONI

So Namutoni was built to some medieval plan probably inspired by the castles of the Rhine. Towers at each corner of a large rectangle provided the officers and men of a cavalry regiment with comfortable quarters.

High walls (now sadly decaying and broken in places) enclosed the courtyard, while the arched gateways could be quickly barricaded.

From the towers the sentries gazed on as remarkable a scene as any in Africa. They could stare until they were tired on herds of blue wildebeest and gemsbok hundreds strong; they could pick off a lion at a range of a hundred yards; lacking meat, they might have killed a thousand springbok in a day without frightening the game. Green bush, brown sand, bluish white dazzle of the Etosha Pan, light blue sky, the massed animals from zebra to ostrich - wonderland, indeed, for a bored sentry.

So a barrier was thrown up by the Germans to keep off the strong Ovambo tribesmen. Native campaigns, against Hottentot and Herero, were being waged in the south; wars that lasted for years and gave the Germans no inclination to 'civilize' Ovamboland. Wisely they went no farther than Namutoni.

But it was not long before Namutoni had to be defended. A force of five hundred Ovambo

fighting men, stirred up by rebellious Hereros, appeared at Namutoni on 28 January 1904. At that time there was a garrison of only seven men, commanded by Unter Offizier Fritz Grossmann.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE CASTLE AT NAMUTONI

You will find the names of these men inscribed on a stone monument to their gallantry just outside the main entrance at

Namutoni. Sergeant Bruno Lassmann, Richard Lemke, Albert Leir, Jakob Bassendowski, Franz Becker, and Karl Hartmann were the others.

Karl Hartmann has a lonely farm twenty miles from Namutoni. He is still a man of immense strength and courage. Attacked by a wounded leopard recently, he fought with his hands until the leopard crept away exhausted, and he was able to stagger home with his wounds. Hartmann has organized a difficult mail and freight service between Tsumeb and Ovamboland. He has gained the respect of South-African and German alike in the territory.

Hartmann was feeding his dog after a rich dinner in honour of the Kaiser's birthday when he happened to look out through a slit in the tower. One of his companions was placing bread in the oven. Hartmann shouted the alarm. He had seen the ostrich plumes of the Ovambo warriors, and the bread was forgotten.

They closed the gates. Nine natives employed by the Germans as servants and cattle-herds failed to reach the fort in time, and were

murdered by the Ovambos. The men of the little garrison realized they could not defend the whole fort; and so they chose one massive tower, stocked with food and water and ammunition.

I slept in that tower, in a stone-flagged room at the head of a stone stairway. And I understood how those seven determined men had kept the horde at bay. They must have raked the approaches in all directions, and with their accurate rifle fire they massacred the Ovambos again and again as they rushed the entrance. The Ovambos were armed with Martini-Henrys. Their bullets pitted the tower, but only one of the Germans within was wounded.

After several assaults had been driven off there was a parley. The Germans had all their flags flying in celebration of the Kaiser's birthday; and the Ovambos were inquisitive about this display.

"We are expecting relief from Tsumeb - many troops are on the march, and they will be here at any moment," the German unter offizier shouted to the Ovambo interpreter.

The Ovambos withdrew to consider this information. Sunset came, and with the dusk the six men carried their wounded comrade out of the tower, slipped into the bush, and hurried away towards Tsumeb. When the Ovambos returned to the attack at daybreak they found the tower empty. Round Namutoni lay one hundred and fifty dead Ovambos.

The castle was set alight and partly destroyed, but the Germans restored it and stationed a larger garrison there. Some inspired, forgotten military commander built the most pleasant swimming bath I have ever known, an oval pool supplied by a generous fountain, shaded by palms and reed walls. The water is always passing through this bath, to the delight of the dusty traveller. It runs away to the Etosha Pan, where the animals drink. The white castle, the green bath, and the wild beasts, all seen at one glance, form a memorable picture on the screen of memory.

Sergeant Kleynhans of the South-West Africa Police and his wife are the only white residents at Namutoni today. They were used to living in solitude. At a previous 'out station,' Mrs.

Kleynhans told me, she had not seen another white woman for seven months.

"Only a few nights ago, seven lions walked past this house and prowled round the kraal where the camels sleep," went on Mrs. Kleynhans. "The native constable threw sacks, soaked in paraffin and set alight, into the kraal. That drove the lions off."

From the police point of view, Namutoni is an agreeable station. Paw-paws grow in the garden. The sergeant is entitled to shoot three springbok a month for his own pot, and one wildebeest for the servants. Guinea fowl and wild duck vary the menu. They have a cow. The rent is only, 2 pounds, 14s. a month, and as there are no entertainments it is possible to save money. An unmarried sergeant once remained at Namutoni for five years and was sorry to leave.

Not that life passes there without excitement. Sergeant Kleynhans had dealt with two murder cases since his arrival four months before. A baby, born in a Heikum Rushman camp not far away, was murdered by the mother and grandmother. According to primitive Bushman

custom, the mother was still feeding a child of five when the second was born. There was not enough nourishment for two - the new-comer was doomed. And the two women who obeyed the barbaric law went to prison for nine months.

Seven years ago Lance-Sergeant Poucher of Namutoni took his wife and young children for a motor drive. He saw a party of Ovambos in the bush, suspected that they were deserters from the mines, and stopped to question them. One of the Ovambos stabbed him to the heart. A motor lorry driver found the grief-stricken wife soon afterwards; but the Ovambos had disappeared. One white constable followed the trail. There was another struggle when he found them, but this time the murderer was killed.

Mrs. Kleynhans sleeps with a shotgun beside her bed when her husband is away on patrol. She has had the experience of locking the door against native robbers and seeking safety on the roof with all the station's firearms piled beside her. She is not a nervous woman.

Usually there is Gert within call - the native constable, half-Hottentot, half-Bushman, and one

of the most skilful trackers in the country. I went over part of the Etosha Pan with Gert as my guide. He could reconstruct any drama of the veld from marks imperceptible to my eyes. He spoke Bushman, Hottentot, Ovambo, Afrikaans, and English. A useful fellow to have handy where civilization ends.

Then there was a young and naked and nameless Heikum Bushman who brought water, washed the plates, attended to my needs in the tower, and showed wild pleasure on receiving a gift of sardines. He had wandered into Namutoni, and probably, by this time, he has heard the call of the spaces and vanished again after the manner of his race. But a Bushman servant, while he remains, is among the best. Show him once how things should be done and his imitative gift will come into play. I thought of bringing the little Heikum back to Cape Town with me - and decided otherwise.

Namutoni fell into the hands of General Coen Brits during the Great War. After the surrender, General Botha sent a message to Namutoni regretting that he would have to

keep the brigade there for a time. To which the famous answer was sent: 'I have captured ten thousand bottles of rum. My men have as much wild beast flesh as they can eat. We are content.'

II

Another more luxurious castle will be found near the edge of the Namib desert, 40 miles to the westward of Maltahohe village. Duwisib they call it. This solid stone castle was built for Baron von Wolf nearly forty years ago, at a time when the spot where it stands was almost the end of the world.

The Baron was said to have been a descendant of Napoleon and to have inherited many heirlooms. I cannot vouch for that. He came to South-West Africa for his health, and he decided to live in the style to which he had been accustomed in Europe. The castle at Duwisib, standing proudly among the Sarisberg mountains, still proves how fully he gratified his magnificent whim.

A transport driver named Esterhuisen contracted to carry supplies for the building of the castle from Luderitzbucht. The task occupied two years. One wardrobe, centuries old, made a complete wagon load over the Namib dunes. Pistols, swords, paintings, and suits of armour were transported to Duwisib. And finally Baron von Wolf went into residence.

On the farm of 137 000 hectares the Baron bred horses, and Duwisib became renowned throughout the territory. (When I was in the district recently the Duwisib horses were still winning events at local race-meetings.) Every year the German officers of the new colony would gather at Duwisib to buy horses and to be entertained on a truly baronial scale. The Baron boasted that it was impossible to empty his cellar of any vintage; and though he once had to send servants riding madly in the night to Maltahohe for more champagne, his guests never succeeded in finishing the last bottle.

The castle and farm changed hands for £10 000 when the Baron died. It was sold again recently for, £30 000. The antiques are still there

in banqueting hall and turrets. Karakul herds graze on the surrounding slopes.

The miniature Rhine castles on the crest of the bowl of hills in which Windhoek the capital lies - these are mere villas in comparison with Duwisib. Many of the older public buildings throughout South-West Africa were built to withstand siege, more solidly even than the ordinary Teuton standard. And many of them actually served that purpose. But few are so obviously the bullet-scarred veterans of desert wars as the old brown mud fort at Warmbad in the south.

Warmbad was not a place where chances could be taken. The Bondelswart Hottentots rose in rebellion not only in the German time, but seven years after the Union occupation. The old mud fort, designed to protect the warm springs of fresh water, was completed in 1893 and defended often in later years. A brass saluting cannon was used to spread the alarm. I found, scattered and rusting in the shadows round the fort, the very cartridge cases jerked out of long Mausers by the garrison. Pigeons nest in the

square tower of the fort now, and a fortified police station guards the village that has seen so much bloodshed.

Within the walls of all these castles far from the Rhine from white Namutoni south to brown Warmbad - you may well imagine strange sounds in the night. The challenge of a ghostly German sentry, perhaps, a deep voice on the ramparts: *Wer da!*

CHAPTER THREE

THE SEITZ DIAMONDS

‘Oom Chris’ Botha, cousin of the famous South-African statesman, first put me on the track of the ‘Seitz’ treasure legend. I have been gathering the threads for a long time. Now I have it all - one of the most remarkable authentic diamond yarns ever whispered about in Africa.

Well past seventy, ‘Oom Chris’ Botha has few grey hairs in his beard. He resembles the late General Louis Botha strongly; and though his career has been less distinguished it has not

lacked adventure. We were, travelling towards a remote goldfield in South-West Africa, and sleeping on the veld at night, when 'Oom Chris' asked me whether I had ever heard of the diamonds hidden by the Germans in that territory during the Great War.

'Oom Chris,' of course, has not missed one of the wars of his time. When the invasion of German South-West Africa by Union troops was planned in 1914, he was granted field rank and led the way through the coastal desert. It was a country he had known ever since 1889, when he had gone elephant hunting with the explorer Chapman. But even 'Oom Chris' could not tell me the full story of the diamonds worth £500,000 that came at last, after weird wanderings, into the hands of the Union Government. Others have filled in the gaps, however, and the tale can be told.

After the surrender of South-West Africa, Major J.G.W. Leipoldt, D.S.O., chief intelligence officer of the Union General Staff, was sitting in his office in Windhoek in August 1915 engaged in a fascinating task. He had been

instructed to find out whether the German military authorities had handed over all their arms and equipment. Many partially destroyed letters and documents had been collected in the abandoned offices of Windhoek, and Major Leipoldt, with the patience of the true detective, was piecing the fragments together.

One document absorbed all his attention. It had been found in the German military paymaster's waste-paper basket, and it proved to be a travelling and subsistence claim for one sergeant and six men, forming a 'diamond escort' from Luderitzbucht to Windhoek. The date was after the declaration of war.

Major Leipoldt had previously suspected the presence of a large hoard of diamonds. The German Governor, Dr. Seitz, and treasury officials, had declared that working on the Luderitzbucht coast diamond-fields had ceased when war broke out; and that the whole output of about 58,000 carats had been shipped away to South America in the steamer *Gertrude Woermann*. Major Leipoldt, however, had reason to believe that the Germans had carried

out a feverish recovery of diamonds after the declaration of war for a special purpose - as emergency cover for an issue of paper marks. He passed on his theory, but his superiors lacked imagination. 'There is no possibility of any diamonds being in the country - attend to your duties and do not waste time on diamonds,' came the order to Major Leipoldt.

But the Major knew that the paper currency of a defeated colonial government would not be accepted by German banks and other cautious people without security. The 'Seitz notes,' as they were called, aroused his suspicion whenever he saw them. And here at last was a clue.

Major Leipoldt, ignoring the official snub, made further inquiries into diamonds. It soon became clear to him that great secrecy had been observed in collecting the 'parcel,' and that even the high German military officers knew nothing of the fate of the diamonds. He might, of course, have gone direct to Dr. Seitz and accused him of concealing property which should have been handed over under the peace treaty. But his hands were tied by his orders. General Smuts

himself had written to him, in reply to a private note, advising him to leave diamonds Alone.

Fragments of code telegrams came into Major Leipoldt's possession. They revealed that the Governor and his Finance Minister had both mentioned diamonds in messages sent to the magistrate of Luderitzbucht on the outbreak of war. The magistrate, however, would know nothing of the hoard after it had passed out of his hands.

Next in the chain of evidence came a queer and grim report from a native informer. The intelligence department employed a number of natives to send word of people hiding or burying things. The report stated that a few nights before the surrender, convicts had dug a grave in the Grootfontein cemetery. When the work was finished, the Germans had shot the convicts. (This appears to have been correct. The German attitude towards the natives in South-West Africa never showed respect for human life.)

Grootfontein is a pleasant subtropical farming settlement in the north of the territory. Dr. Seitz and other civilian officials went there after

Windhoek had been abandoned; and Major Leipoldt remembered this fact when he considered the cemetery story.

About this time Major Leipoldt was mixing with the many German civilians who had been allowed to remain in the comfortable Windhoek hotels, and he was spending his own money entertaining them in the hope of securing further clues. Very soon it will be seen that he had reason to regret this diplomatic hospitality.

Major Leipoldt decided to investigate the story of the grave. He and another officer visited the cemetery at night with the native informer. There was no coffin in the grave; but they found signs suggesting that a small box had been buried and later removed.

Another native informer led them towards the first really important discovery. This man declared that convicts had been digging at night in an apple orchard on the Tigerquelle Government experimental farm outside Groot-fontein. More murders had been committed. Major Leipoldt confined himself tenaciously to the diamonds. He inspected the orchard, found

a withering apple tree where the ground appeared to have been disturbed, and dug. Eight feet from the surface two boxes were exposed. Here at last was a promise of success.

The first box contained silver plate, engraved with the Hohenzollern arms, and intended for the banquets in Windhoek arranged in honour of the visit of the Crown Prince. In the second box were the personal papers and decorations of Dr. Seitz - and something more, an inventory book. This book gave full details of the diamonds from Luderitzbucht as they were packed in Windhoek. There was also a letter to a German sergeant, a man described as 'a hard-boiled Prussian non-commissioned officer with a high sense of duty and a slavish respect for nobility and his officers'. As this was the man responsible for burying the diamonds and shooting the convicts he will remain nameless.

Major Leipoldt made inquiries about the sergeant, and also about a high German official. He was informed that just after the surrender the sergeant had trekked out to the

east of Grootfontein, where the Kalahari wilderness begins. He had been accompanied by one native, and he had taken two pack-mules. The sergeant had returned after three days, and it came as no surprise to Major Leipoldt to learn that the sergeant had returned alone.

The high German official was found to have made a number of suspicious journeys between Grootfontein and Windhoek. He was searched on the train, and it was proved that he had contravened the martial law regulations by carrying a number of uncensored letters. Among them were letters from the ex-Governor, Dr. Seitz, who thus became liable to prosecution.

The night after the official's arrest Major Leipoldt was entertaining some German women at one of the hotels in an attempt to gather further information. He had to have his stomach pumped out after the party, and the medical officers diagnosed digitalis poisoning. This unpleasant interlude prevented him from taking part in

certain further stages of the search, though he was in time for the finish.

By this time, of course, no one was sneering at the diamond legend. At a meeting of high Union officials it was decided that Dr. Seitz should be brought before a court of inquiry. There was one legal difficulty. The diamonds had been the property of the producing companies, and it was not known whether the German Government had commandeered them, or whether it had merely taken charge of them in the capacity of a trustee. Under the Treaty of Khorab, when the Germans surrendered, all government property had to be disclosed. It was thought that Governor Seitz might cover himself by stating that the hidden diamonds were the property of the Regie, the diamond control organization.

It was a delicate situation, for the Union officials were still without knowledge of where the diamonds were hidden, and they could not use the Prussian methods of the period to extract that information.

Major Leipoldt suggested making contact with the wild Bushmen of the area where the sergeant

had taken the diamonds to their final hiding place. He pointed out that the unseen Bushmen watched every white traveller in that territory, and that even if they had not witnessed the digging they would be able to follow the sergeant's tracks to the spot.

The high official was approached with guile, and it was pointed out to him that Dr. Seitz would not care to face a charge of smuggling letters. All this unpleasantness would be avoided if the diamonds were revealed. The official gave nothing away, but he agreed to discuss the matter with Dr. Seitz.

These manoeuvres failed. A party of military officers (including Major Leipoldt) and civilian officials then interviewed Governor Seitz at Grootfontein to bring matters to a head.

His Excellency treated them to a memorable display of temper. (Drawing a tooth is simple in comparison with relieving a German Governor of diamonds worth half a million.) Dr. Seitz declared, in a sense, truthfully, that he did not know where the diamonds had gone. He was informed that proof had been secured that the diamonds had been

in his possession in Windhoek. General Berrange, the senior military officer present, ordered a search of the personal belongings of Dr. and Madame Seitz. This revealed nothing more striking than bags containing about £1 800 in gold sovereigns in one of Madame Seitz's trunks. The money was returned, but Dr. Seitz was still an angry man when the party went back empty-handed to Windhoek.

It was decided that Dr. Seitz should be brought to Windhoek, when General Beves, the Military Governor, would make a final demand. Dr. Seitz duly appeared and, bluffing to the last, refused to hand over the diamonds.

"Well, Your Excellency, you refuse, and in so doing you fail to comply with the Treaty of Khorab," pointed out General Beves. "The peace Treaty is therefore now at an end, and we are going to impose a levy on the country to meet the cost of administration."

Dr. Seitz asked for time to consult his legal advisers, and the party dispersed for lunch. The Union section enjoyed their lunch, with the exception of Major Leipoldt, still suffering from the effects of digitalis. After lunch Dr. Seitz gave

in. He named two Germans who were to be escorted to the hiding-place of the diamonds.

And now the tale is taken up by Lieutenant Collingwood Selby of the South-African Mounted Rifles, stationed at Grootfontein, now living in retirement in Cape Town.

"You are to proceed with escort consisting of two N.C.O's. and ten men to Otjituo," his orders read." Three Germans will travel with you and will be under your charge. You and your escort will be present while they are digging for certain articles which are supposed to be buried there. You will not take the parcels over, but will allow the Germans to keep them. Your duties are to prevent the three Germans running away and also to prevent them being robbed."

Selby and his men trekked with the Germans for 60 miles into desert country, covering the distance on horseback, accompanied by a cart, between daybreak and five in the afternoon. The spot indicated by the Germans was a few miles from Otjituo, the last police outpost in the territory, on the way to the Okavango river. Selby suggested waiting until the next day before

starting digging; but the Germans were anxious to finish their disagreeable task. So after a few hours rest they all went to an ant-bear hole pointed out by one of the Germans - the only man in the party who knew the exact spot. In the moonlight Selby watched them dig out a soldier's tin kit box. It was padlocked.

The box, with locks untouched, was taken by cart to Otjituo police camp. There the whole party spent the night, Selby and the Germans sharing one room, with a guard outside the door. During the trek back to Grootfontein next day several diamonds were found on the floor of the cart. A corner of the tin box had rusted through, and more diamonds could be seen through the crack. Selby then gave the Germans a blanket to lash round the box, and the journey ended without further incident.

Narrating his part in the affair twenty-three years afterwards, Selby seemed little moved by the drama. "It was my own camel-hair blanket," he remarked, "and I never received it back." Box and blanket went by train to Windhoek. A gathering of Union and German officials, half

eager, half despondent, gathered to witness the formal opening of the box in the 'Raadsaal' of the government buildings on the hill. It was regarded as an historic occasion.

Dr. Seitz had brought with him, as diamond expert, a Dr. E. Reuning of the Deutsche Koloniale Gesellschaft. (This was one of the geologists who, twelve years later, helped to uncover the diamond wealth of Alexander Bay at the Orange River mouth.) The rusty box was broken open. It was found that ants had entered through the hole in the corner and carried red soil with them.

Before the burial of the box there had been a number of separate bags, each one containing the output of a company. The white ants had eaten the canvas bags and it was impossible to distinguish one parcel from another. One stone, however, stood out among the rough white crystals from the Namib. This was the 'Ariams' diamond, a magnificent lemon-tinted specimen of 40 carats, valued by Dr. Reuning at £5000. This had been found in an inland district and had been the property of the German Government.

Altogether the stones weighed 75,000 carats. They were sent down to Cape Town and sold for £500,000 after the war. Dr. Seitz maintained to the last that he had committed no breach of the local peace treaty as the diamonds (apart from the 'Ariams' stone) were not German Government property.

Some time afterwards it was learnt that Dr. Seitz was acting in accordance with a plan made soon after the 'Agadir incident' in 1910. Secret instructions were sent from Berlin to Windhoek detailing the procedure to be followed in the event of war. The diamond companies at Luderitzbucht, instead of handing their outputs over to the 'Regie,' were ordered to entrust them to the magistrate. This was done, as related, but German attention to detail broke down during the hurried evacuation of Windhoek, and the tell-tale evidence reached Major Leipoldt's desk. A less determined officer, discouraged and left to work in defiance of orders, would certainly have allowed this prize to slip away. When Dr. Seitz was repatriated he would probably have carried the little tin box with him to the Fatherland as a

small but valuable fragment saved from the wreckage of war.

What actually happened was that the Union Government, after the sale of the diamonds, applied the former German taxation formula, taking about, £250 000 and handing the other half of the proceeds back to the diamond companies.

Such a haul naturally aroused thoughts of personal rewards in the minds of several men who had taken part in the long and difficult treasure hunt. Major Leipoldt himself made no move until he was informed that a select committee of the Union House of Assembly was to investigate the claim of a former secret agent, a German employed by the Union authorities, to a reward for services leading to the recovery of the Seitz diamonds. This naturally led Major Leipoldt to put forward a claim on his own behalf, and further claims on behalf of one assistant and the widow of another. The secret agent failed dismally in his attempt. The Leipoldt claims were dismissed mainly on the ground that the officers concerned had secured the

information in the ordinary course of duty. The verdict has a familiar official ring about it, but it did nothing to soothe the memory of the digitalis poisoning. And Selby, who made no claim, has lost for ever his camel-hair blanket.

Yet there is still a possibility that the dogged Major Leipoldt will find treasure. He is now government land surveyor in Springbok, Namaqualand. He has in his possession a secret German dossier marked 'Lobengula' - another relic of his work as chief intelligence officer in Windhoek. The authorities would have laughed at that, too, as they laughed at the fantastic diamond yarn. So Major Leipoldt seeks the Lobengula treasure alone - the gold and diamonds and ivory that, as every Rhodesian pioneer knows full well, were carried away by a trusted impi after the burning of Bulawayo.

Every year, when his leave falls due, Major, Leipoldt studies his clues to the Lobengula millions. He has made five long journeys to Angola in search of this wealth.

It is hard, perhaps, to place much faith in legends of buried treasure. "These charts - I think

the fairies have the making of them, for they bewitch sober men," said Raleigh. But I know enough of Major Leipoldt's quest to make me wonder whether I shall not have the privilege one day of recording another piece of work as brilliant and as successful as the discovery of the Seitz diamonds.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN OF THE FRONTIER

Many bold women have faced and defeated the African loneliness. Wives and missionary women, travellers, nurses, flying girls - all these have experienced the terror of vast spaces and taken the risks. But the bravest story I know concerns the struggle of Frau Bulleck, a widow with a young family living on a remote farm in the frontier district of Gobabis, South-West Africa.

I first heard mention of Frau Bulleck while passing through the Gobabis outposts with a Kalahari expedition in 1936. The police had

warned us that Bushman raiders, wild bow-and-arrow men of the desert, had been stealing cattle on both sides of the South-West Africa - Bechuanaland border. Patrol after patrol had hunted the Bushmen unsuccessfully. Farmers were angry - and nervous. It was a state of affairs that had arisen at intervals ever since white settlers had penetrated that far corner. Raids still occur today.

One farm in the district, I was told, had become almost immune from Bushman attacks - the farm Alexeck, about 140 miles northwards from Gobabis, the home of Frau Bulleck. The Bushmen feared the lonely widow who had chosen to live in a wilderness cut off, for months at a stretch, from police protection and civilization.

Frau Bulleck's farm lies in Kalahari ranching country, and I travelled close to her boundaries during the journey eastwards into the desert. It was only recently, however, that I learnt the full story of her voluntary exile in that wilderness. Mr. N. van B. de Jong, a cattle buyer in South-

West Africa for many years, told me of his visit to Frau Bulleck and her extraordinary family.

Herr Alex Bulleck was one of the German soldiers who were granted free farms after the native wars in the territory. He was a famous hunter in his time; but there came a day when he was out unarmed in search of straying cattle, and met a lion. So there was a widow with five daughters and a tiny boy, and only the farm to support them. That was soon after the Great War ended, and the country had passed from Germany to South-Africa.

The farm was one of the largest in South-West Africa, possibly 50,000 square miles in area, but unfenced and with limits undefined. Whenever Herr Bulleck had tried to set up fences, the Bushmen had stolen the wire to tip their arrows. There were wooded plains where eland and blue wildebeest roamed; limestone pans overgrown with thorn trees, often containing water holes; and the queer depressions known to the Hereros as marambas, apparently dry but with water near the surface.

It was on this farm, in 1922, that Captain van Ryneveld, magistrate of Gobabis, was ambushed and killed by a Bushman's poisoned arrow. Yet Frau Bulleck stayed on with her children.

She had decided, almost on the day of her husband's death, that it would be impossible to support her family elsewhere. On the farm were most of the necessities of life. The herd of cattle was small but sufficient. There could never be a shortage of meat while the game lasted; and the teeming game had seldom been disturbed by hunters. Frau Bulleck clung to the farm desperately, as a last hope.

At first the authorities tried to persuade her to accept a smaller farm close to Gobabis. Two reasons lay behind the offer - the menace of the Bushmen, and the need to educate the children.

Frau Bulleck had already dealt with the Bushman danger with a rifle. She soon became known among the roving Bushmen bands as a formidable enemy. One Bush chief complained to the police. An official letter, asking for an explanation, reached the widow. And the widow wrote back to headquarters in

Windhoek enclosing the hoof of a cow killed by Bushmen as evidence supporting her action. She discouraged official visits, and was finally left in peace. In a more settled land, no doubt, Frau Bulleck would not have achieved this weird isolation. But South-West Africa was then, and is still, in the pioneer stage; and strong characters still find scope for their whims. Frau Bulleck held out, against wild men and the demands of civilization, on her distant farm.

Meanwhile there were the five daughters and the little boy. Frau Bulleck tackled the problem of their education in her own way. She had served as maid in a noble household on the shores of the Baltic. A woman of some education herself, she managed her home intelligently, and with refinement. But few people knew the efforts she was making at that period. Frau Bulleck, as I have said, feared contact with the outside world. Even the German missionaries at Epukiro, about 60 miles away, seldom saw the lonely widow.

During the rainy season of 1929 Mr. de Jong planned a cattle buying trip from Gobabis, and decided (more from curiosity than expectation of business) to call on Frau Bulleck. In Gobabis village there was a store keeper who came from the same German province as Frau Bulleck; a man who bought her farm produce, supplied her with groceries, and had gained her confidence. This man gave Mr. de Jong a letter which ensured hospitality. And thus started a series of adventures which Mr. de Jong described to me:

"I drove away from Gobabis in a large motor car with two passengers - Father Dohn, a missionary bound for Epukiro, and a tall Herero native servant," recalled Mr. de Jong. "The heat was terrific. Owing to the rains I could not take the usual route along the dry bed of the Black Nossob river, I was forced to follow a wagon track through the Kalahari to Epukiro. The sand was so heavy that I travelled in low gear all day, using tin after tin of water for the radiator. When I reached Epukiro in the evening I was exhausted, yet

anxious to push on towards Frau Bulleck's farm at night to avoid the heat of another day.

"Now a new difficulty arose. I was told that no one had travelled over the unmade track to the farm for seven months, and the faint trail was overgrown with grass and bush. Not a single native at the mission would volunteer to accompany me as guide. They declared they were afraid of Frau Bulleck, and to a lesser extent of bushmen.

"Finally I decided to navigate across the unknown stretch of about 40 miles by map and compass, a method often used in the little known Kalahari areas.

"During the night drive something struck my windscreen. I jumped out with my rifle, found a broken arrow, and fired a shot to frighten the lurking bushman sniper away. My Herero boy now feared the worst, and as we approached the farm he trembled.

"By 3.30 a.m. I had located the dry river banks on which the farm was situated, and at 4 a.m. the howling of dogs announced that I had arrived.

"Two women came out to welcome me. One was Frau Bulleck, the other her eldest daughter, then a girl of twenty-two. I told them I was exhausted and wanted to go to bed; but they had not seen a visitor for seven months and they kept me talking until I dropped asleep in my chair.

"I remember fragments of that conversation. They questioned me excitedly, but the things that interested them most were the trivial happenings in the territory. For example, when I told them that the railway time-table from Gobabis to Windhoek had been altered they chattered eagerly, though they only saw a train once a year when they made their trek to the village.

"I studied the Bulleck household in detail when I awoke about noon. Frau Bulleck and her daughters all wore skin trousers such as the Bechuanas make - wonderful garments of springbok leather, sewn like a patchwork quilt. But even more remarkable were their *kap doeks*, padded handkerchiefs worn round the head in the style that later became fashionable in more

civilised places. Their faces had been tanned brown by the sun. When they took off their *doeks*, however, their necks were white, with sharp lines of demarcation between sun-bronze and protected skin.

"The *doeks* evidently shut out sound. As a result Frau Bulleck and her daughters had formed the habit of shouting; and they continued to shout indoors after removing their headgear. They often had difficulty in following me when I spoke in an ordinary voice - I was forced to shout back.

"All of them wore home made *veldskoens* on their feet, and although the farm house was comfortably furnished and neat it was clear that they had to improvise many things. Tallow lights, made from butter fat, were used instead of paraffin lamps. The beds were covered with *karosses* of wild animals skins. They were without money, newspapers, radio; yet, in spite of living this 'Robinson Crusoe' life, their manners were perfect, nothing was done roughly or carelessly.

"During supper that night I heard an ominous noise from the cattle kraal, rather like a saw cutting through wood. Frau Bulleck looked up from her plate and spoke casually: 'Annie, go out and see what is wrong. I think a leopard has jumped in among the cattle again.' She dealt with the matter as calmly as though a cat was in the rubbish bin.

"Annie took a shotgun with her, but no shot was fired. She soon returned, took her place at table without a tremor, and remarked: 'I found the leopard in a trap. But it's all right, Mother, I did not waste a cartridge - I clubbed it to death.' Anyone who has seen the rage of a trapped leopard will realize the courage of the girl.

"The Bulleck girls were all fearless hunters. Though they had guns, they seldom used them; cartridges were too expensive. They preferred to bring down eland and other large and small antelope with Bushman bows and arrows. Frau Bulleck herself was a marvellous tracker. She assisted the police, during the van Ryneveld tragedy, by examining Bushman footprints and naming the very men concerned.

"Apart from the farm life, however, the daughters had vague ideas about the world. I asked Frau Bulleck how she expected them to find husbands. It appeared she had made plans for the three grown up girls, and intended arranging for three young men from her own German town to come out to the farm. This scheme, I believe, was actually carried out; but the men were appalled by the isolation, and the girls remained unmarried.

"At the time of my visit, there was not a servant on the farm. Frau Bulleck and her daughters could deal with every task - branding cattle, chopping wood, repairing wagons, making gates and carts. The only product they could sell was butter-fat, which they sealed in tins.

"They had a vegetable garden, with a well 85 feet deep, dug by the girls. I saw one of them go down a ladder made of riems (strips of cattle hide) when the bucket jammed. The homestead was surrounded by walls, but Frau Bulleck's reputation was the best defence against attack by Bushmen.

"I was disappointed in the cattle. The small herd had lacked fresh blood for too long. Nevertheless I bought twenty-eight head, branded them and considered the problem of driving them to railhead. I could not give my rifle to my Herero boy, as it would have been against the law to supply a native with a firearm; and the Herero was reluctant to go because of the Bushmen. After much persuasion, however, he set off for Epukiro. I took a different route by car. After four days at Epukiro the boy and the cattle had not arrived, so I returned to Frau Bulleck's farm. There I learnt that the cattle had wandered back home, and the boy had waited helplessly for me.

"Frau Bulleck solved the problem by sending two of her daughters off to Epukiro in charge of the cattle. They delivered them safely and my visit came to an end."

Since Mr. de Jong's visit, I understand, Frau Bulleck has bought a motor-lorry. She is able to reach Gobabis in five or six hours, instead of travelling for days by oxwagon. But her farm is still among the remote places of South-West Africa. How many men, I wonder, would

have clung to such a lonely home and struggled to success as Frau Bulleck has done.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND THE POLICE ZONE

I

‘Beyond the police zone’ is an official phrase in South-West Africa. It is a comforting phrase, too, for all who like to think that something of the old, lawless Africa still survives. ‘Beyond the police zone’ - a phrase that speaks boldly for itself.

You may wonder how it is possible that large territories should remain un-policed and unexploited, even unexplored half a century after Germany annexed South-West Africa, and almost a quarter of a century after occupation by the Union of South-Africa. Yet this is a fact. The latest official map shows blank spaces and little-known areas amounting to more than 100,000 square miles - all ‘beyond the police zone.’ According to the

most recent estimates, there are more than 150,000 people living under the old tribal laws in those dark spaces. A white traveller is an object of interest. (I saw one humorist stagger a crowd by snatching out his false teeth.) Scores, probably hundreds of natives there, have never seen a white man.

I am always happy when I can pass beyond the police zone again. It is a grand and spacious experience, the right antidote for a long spell of city life. Past the last farm, the last police station, the last sign of government...

Four native reserves, and much of the diamondiferous coastal Namib Desert, lie beyond the police zone. When all the land within the civilized borders of South-West Africa has been allotted, farmers may be granted space in parts of the present forbidden areas. One day, no doubt, the Kaokoveld will be thrown open for settlement. The Kaokoveld has been the scene of strange dramas. You will find it marked on the map to the south of the Kunene River. It reaches

down almost to Cape Cross, and inland for about 200 miles.

If you decide to visit the Kaokoveld it will cost you a fine of, £50, and possibly a prison sentence. No permits are issued; no one but officials and policemen may enter the territory. If you go and die of thirst as some have done then you escape the fine.

I have met a number of sergeants of that remarkable force, the South-West African Police, who have dashed into the Kaokoveld to arrest trespassers. There is a legendary treasure house of diamonds on the Kaokoveld coast that has lured illicit expeditions by sea, land, and air again and again. So the policemen have to risk their lives, too, in cars and on camels, to keep raiders away. One true yarn, told to me at an outpost recently, will give an idea of the Kaokoveld.

A sergeant, just about to take his leave and get married, was ordered to drive off immediately with two constables to find and arrest a party of white men who had entered the Kaokoveld. The only police car available

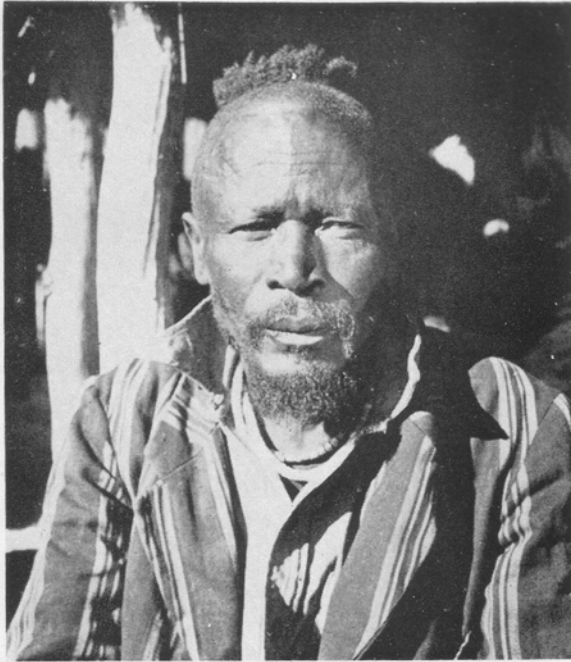
was small and ill-equipped, but the three men set out.

When the clutch burnt out they repaired it with the brake linings. When the last of their fresh water had been drunk - and poured into the radiato - they still followed the tracks of the diamond raiders. But at the end of three days of thirst, they could only lie beneath the car, in the only shade for miles, and wait for death.

"Our tinned food was no use to us," the sergeant recalled. "We had no appetite for bully beef, and I found that even the fig jam could not be swallowed. My companions could not talk. I decided, after a great effort, to walk on in search of help."

The sergeant tottered along and almost immediately he saw the first human beings encountered for hundreds of miles. They were beachcombing natives, an extremely low type. (Some authorities believe that the 'Strand-loopers,' extinct in South-Africa, may survive on the Kaokoveld coast.) These wild creatures led

the parched policemen to an overhanging rock, and there they saw a pool of water.



WANJA THE HEADMAN

He wears someone's old school blazer now, but once he was a member of cruel Chief Mandume's bodyguard.

"I drank so long that the natives pulled me out by the feet," declared the sergeant. "Then I tried to thank them, but although I know a little of all the chief native languages of South-West Africa, I could not make them understand me. I do not think they had seen white men before."

Refreshed, the policemen found they could eat. They filled their water bottles and followed the trail. The tracks showed plainly that a small motor car had piloted a heavy motor truck through and over the dunes towards the mouth of the Kunene River.

Up the slope of a great dune raced the police car. It mounted the crest, and plunged down the far side. No brakes, remember. As the determined policemen hastily scanned the sandy wastes they saw their men right in the path of the car. The poachers were enjoying a meal: Into their midst, scattering tins and bottles, crashed the police car. Right and left jumped the diamond poachers. The car stopped at the foot of the dune and the policemen walked back to arrest the startled raiders.

The illicit motor truck carried supplies for two months. "Sacks of sugar, every possible spare part, tins of flour - a wonderful outfit," recalled the sergeant. "They came quietly. I followed them back, and got married after all."

II

The Kunene, one of Africa's least known rivers, forms the international frontier between the Kaokoveld and Angola. The Ovamboland-Angola frontier (which I crossed recently) was defined only six years ago. It was a troublesome task. One of the surveyors who was there, suffering from bad drinking water and malaria, told me the story.

As far back as 1886 Germany and Portugal signed an agreement stating that the frontier should run 'from the waterfalls which are formed by the Kunene breaking through the Serra Cana' along the parallel of latitude to the River Cubango. But the country had not been properly explored. Later travellers discovered two different groups of waterfalls! Naturally, Portugal claimed the southern falls, while the

South-West African authorities pointed out that the line should be drawn from the northern cascade. Thus a strip of territory 300 miles in length stretching due east and west, and 6 miles wide, came into dispute. For years this strip was treated as a neutral zone, jointly administered by a Portuguese and a South-African official living at a queer little outpost called Namakundi.



THE SECURITY OF THE STOCKADE THAT SURROUNDS EVERY OVAMBO KRAAL IS SEEN CLEARLY IN THIS PICTURE

During the dispute in 1920 the geography of the falls was cleared up at last, and the blunders of old explorers were corrected. The southern Rua Cana Falls were accurately described for the first time. At that point the Kunene makes a leap

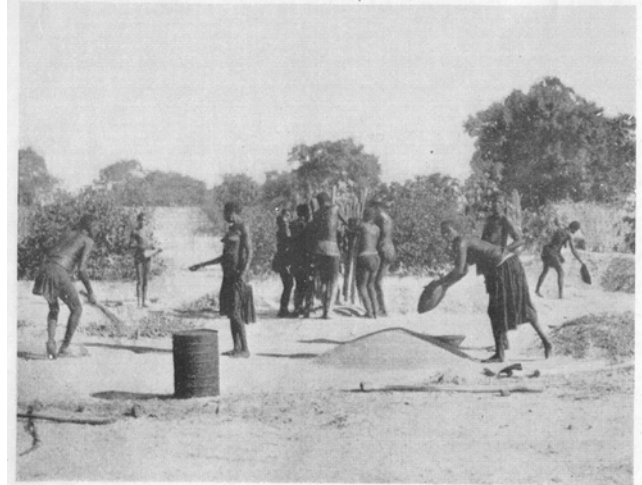
of 400 feet, a scene according to one traveller 'hardly inferior in grandeur to the Victoria or Niagara Falls.' A rumour that a greater waterfall awaits discovery between the Rua Cana and the sea has not yet been disproved. There is reason to believe that an impressive drop may still be placed on the map.

The new, arrow straight frontier, I found, was used as a track in dry seasons. It is marked by concrete beacons, all numbered, 10 kilometres apart; and the bush is cleared right along the frontier to form a path twenty yards wide. Thus there is no risk of losing the way anywhere along the frontier. You simply drive north or south, look for the nearest beacon, and fix your position exactly.

I have always felt the fascination of crossing international frontiers, and one day I drove from Oshikongo in Ovamboland to where the proud flag of Portugal flies at Namakundi. The Portuguese official entertained me on the veranda of a ramshackle wooden bungalow. Ten miles to the south was the South-African flag,

yet already I knew that I had entered a different atmosphere.

"You like, pairhaps, ze porto? I go. I do not know. I inspect ze porto. No-only so much! All right. We drink ze Engleesh tea. One moment. I will put on my cravat."



OVAMBO WOMEN STAMPING CORN

He was sallow from fever, his head was shaven, but he showed the typical Portuguese hospitality. I was invited to shoot elephants in

Angola. Treat the Portuguese with ordinary courtesy, remember they were the pioneers in tropical Africa, and you will never find them difficult. I returned to Ovamboland with pleasant memories of that far corner under the Portuguese flag.

III

Eastwards of Ovamboland is the Okavango reserve. There, too, the traveller leaves hotels and police hundreds of miles behind, and (if he has a sound motor car) reaches a weird river people. Related to the Ovambos, they are less intelligent. When the Administrator of South-West Africa visited the area a few years ago, piles of firewood were heaped in readiness for the official camps. Immediately the Okavango people became excited. All the children, they declared, were to be burnt as a sacrifice to the Administrator!

Lions were driven into the tribal areas at about the same period by the flooding of the plains. Again rumours ran through the land. Neighbouring tribesmen, it was said, had sent their departed spirits in the shape of lions to prey

on the Okavango cattle and work off a grudge. The Okavango natives are cowards. They allowed the lions to destroy 200 cattle and 60 donkeys. Finally they appealed to the Native Commissioner, Mr. Harold Eedes. He followed the spoor and fired at a large lioness.

Then began a chapter of suffering, almost of tragedy. The wounded lioness charged and mauled Mr. Eedes. His head, shoulders, arms, and back were lacerated. Only a brave and powerful man could have hoped to survive such a struggle with fierce teeth and claws. Mr. Eedes pretended to be dead. The lioness strode away. Natives dressed the wounds with bark and carried Mr. Eedes to his car. He alone could drive - and nearly collapsing from ghastly wounds he drove back to his headquarters. There a missionary came to the rescue, and set out with Mr. Eedes for the nearest hospital. A mattress on a motor lorry was his ambulance.

The Tsumeb mine hospital was the nearest. It was 250 miles away, and this was the rainy season. Meanwhile a native runner had been sent ahead with a message explaining the situation.

With the roads waterlogged, the runner arrived long before the truck. An aeroplane searched the bush, saw the truck, dropped medicines and serum by parachute, and returned without landing.

After an ordeal lasting days, Mr. Eedes reached Tsumeb alive. For weeks the doctors expected him to die. They reckoned without his magnificent strength. He is back in the Okavango now, among his lazy and improvident tribes.

Finally there is that narrow corridor of country known as the Caprivi Zipfel, linking the Okavango with the Zambesi river. Two motor expeditions have penetrated this most inaccessible of all areas outside the police zone. Both parties had to hack their way through the bush. Here is the place to study primitive man, for the natives seldom see white people. They trap otters, pythons, iguanas, and other wild animals; and they live largely on fish.

In the German time, and for some years after the Great War, this Caprivi belt was ruled by the Bechuanaland Protectorate on behalf of the

Government of South-West Africa. Only in recent years has Windhoek taken charge.

The strip was annexed by Germany in an attempt to link her African colonies from west to east, and Caprivi was the German statesman in charge of negotiations. About fifty islands in the main channel of the Zambesi river fall within the Caprivi area. It is an unhealthy land of Bushmen, backward natives, and big game. Long after other areas have been settled, the Caprivi will remain beyond the police zone.

CHAPTER SIX

WEIRD CORNERS

I

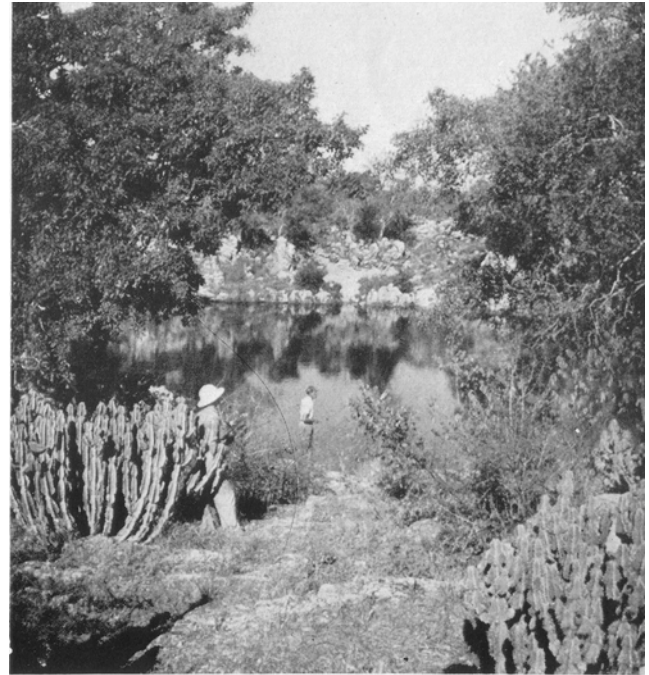
Travellers who are sensitive to an atmosphere of the weird will shudder as they approach Otjikoto. This mysterious crater lake, 12 miles from the mining town of Tsumeb, has a more sinister reputation than any other pool of water in South-West Africa. And not without reason.

After my own visit to Otjikoto, I am able to listen to the native legends without smiling.

"No one who enters that lake will come out alive," the native guides told Sir Francis Galton, the explorer who discovered Otjikoto in 1851. Nevertheless, Galton and his companions, Andersson and John Allen, swam there to the astonishment of the Hereros, Ovambos, and Bushmen who watched them. They emerged safely, more fortunate than other white men who followed in later years.

I can picture the scene - a circle of enticing green water surrounded by steep limestone walls, shaded at the edges by cactus, tropical trees, and thorn bush. The explorers must have enjoyed shaking off the flies and mosquitoes as they plunged, free from superstition, into the dreaded lake.

To the natives assembled on the rim, this was magic and these men were sorcerers. Ovambos do not swim; the only rivers they know are crocodile rivers, and wisely they avoid the water. As Galton reached the bank and climbed out, the Hereros set up a chant of praise.



OTJIKOTO—THE LAKE OF MYSTERY

Galton caught a number of small fish at Otjikoto. He left with pleasant memories of the place. Possibly he would not have been so happy

if he had known that the lake was a bottomless crater with a whirlpool in the centre. I heard the story of the whirlpool in Tsumeb, and was inclined to doubt it. One of my friends, who has swum everywhere from Waikiki Beach to Rio, disregarded all warnings and struck out cautiously across Otjikoto. As he approached the centre he experienced a slight dragging sensation; he was in no danger, but the thought alarmed him. I shouted to him to come out, and after pausing for a photograph he clambered up the bank.

A moment later we saw a movement in the deep shadow of the overhanging dolomite. It was a large snake, lurking among the weeds in the water; and when we stoned it, the snake went writhing into hiding. Of course it may have been harmless. But my friend will remember the waters of Otjikoto as the most repulsive bathing place in the world.

Above the lake we found a memorial to Johannes Stephanus Cook, postmaster of Tsumeb, drowned in Otjikoto on 16 October 1927 while swimming with friends. A man who

saw the tragedy told me that Cook was a good swimmer. The water was warm, and there seemed to be no possibility of cramp. Cook flung up an arm and vanished for ever. Those present had no doubt that he had been sucked down in a vortex.

After the drowning, vigorous efforts were made to recover the body. Balls of strong twine were joined, and a lead sinker was attached. The line was lowered from a raft, but the sinker did not touch bottom. Then dynamite was exploded in the depths of the pool. Bones of animals appeared on the surface, but the body was never recovered. The people of Tsumeb never swim in Otjikoto now.

Dr. P.A. Wagner, the geologist, examined Otjikoto some years ago. He describes it as a sink hole lake, elliptical in shape, measuring 820 feet by 650 feet. Dr. Wagner gives the normal depth of water as 600 feet, but does not state whether this is an estimate or the result of soundings. I know that attempts to determine the depth during the Great War were unsuccessful. On that occasion members of the South-African

Forces were trying to recover field-guns and ammunition flung into Otjikoto by the retreating Germans before they surrendered. Divers sent up from the coast reached a ledge not far below the surface and recovered a few shells; but the heavy guns still rest in the unknown deep of Otjikoto. They are not likely to be disturbed.

Supplies of water for the town of Tsumeb and the mine were once drawn from Otjikoto. Rainfall *affects* the level, however, and during the heavy rains of 1908 the pumps were submerged. In very dry seasons the lake has dropped back into its crater for 70 feet. The pumping station now stands rusty and abandoned in the bush.

Scientists regard Otjikoto as part of a huge underground cavern. There are similar lakes in the district, though many miles away; and experiments with dyes have proved beyond doubt that the waters are linked by subterranean channels. At Otjikoto the limestone roof has either fallen in or been removed by weathering.

The lake at Guinas, 20 miles from Otjikoto, is much larger. A series of small pools then lead to a cave of stalactites, bats, and skeletons. This is at

Gamkorab, more than 200 miles from Otjikoto; and the cave gives access to yet another underground lake. The water is difficult to reach; a precipice is encountered, and ropes must be used. I do not think much investigation of this lake has been carried out since a party of Germans explored the waters with a portable boat before the war.

So the queer water system remains largely a mystery. Dr. W.J. Luyten, the astronomer, who visited Otjikoto, frankly admits that he cannot explain the forces controlling the rise and fall of water. 'They are beyond our ken,' he says, 'hidden deep in the bowels of the earth.' He records the fact that soundings have been taken to a depth of 400 feet at Otjikoto without touching bottom, and suggests that the lead-line may have been swept away into one of the underground channels forming the inlet and outlet of the lake.

Otjikoto deserves to be explored more thoroughly by scientists. The lakes of Africa have not yet given up all their secrets. Lake Nyasa is said to rumble just before the rainy season. In Ashanti there is Lake Bosumtwi of

unknown origin; once or twice a year the surface becomes rough, the water turns black, the air smells like gunpowder, and dead fish float on the surface. Otjikoto, placid though it may seem, does not figure in so many native superstitions without reason. Men in Tsumeb told me that when the dynamite was used, fish with blind eyes came into the daylight; fish from great depths.

There is a cave near the water level at Otjikoto. You may see bats and owls in this sanctuary, as Galton saw them, and doves circling over the pool. But you will not find peace beside these waters. Who knows how many lives Otjikoto has claimed?

II

Will a planet one day strike the earth with disastrous consequences? The question has been asked all over the world as a result of the recent 'Object Reinmuth' affair.

Scientists are not alarmed, however, for the globe has been spinning round for a long time now and the fragments from space which have

hit the earth have all chosen remote places. No one, I think, has ever been killed by a meteorite.

South-Africa is particularly interested in the matter, for it appears that areas with a 'power of attraction' exist in the Union and South-West Africa. The largest known meteorite lies on Hoba West Farm, near Grootfontein, South-West Africa - a monster of iron and nickel weighing at least 50 tons. Further south, a whole 'swarm' of meteorites fell together on the banks of the dusty Fish River. I have seen pieces of this black metal used as paper weights in South-West Africa; and at Gibeon I heard the story of the discovery.

Back in pre-war days an enterprising farmer named Peter van der Westhuizen noticed these fragments on his property near Gibeon. He sent specimens to museums in Germany, and soon secured a contract to supply meteorites at the rate of £4 per 100 lb. Many a profitable lump of metal he and his Hottentots dug out of the limestone.

I have seen a rockery built up with these meteorites in the public gardens at Windhoek. Some of them are marked in a way that

suggests the natives tried to chip off pieces of metal for their weapons, just as the Eskimos of Greenland used the meteors that fell there.

Museums in many parts of the world have offered to purchase meteors from South-West Africa at a price which works out at more than £35,840 a ton. But the Government will not part with these 'fallen stars.' An English scientist went to great trouble and expense removing a meteorite not long ago. When he reached the nearest railway station the queer freight was identified and the scientist was told there was a ban on the export of meteorites. He offered to pay the administration any sum in reason for the specimen, but the offer was refused.

Today it is forbidden even to move the meteorites of Gibeon from the graveyard where they buried themselves centuries ago. If a trade in meteorites ever becomes legal, prospectors will certainly make rich hauls in many parts of the country. There must be many of these masses still undiscovered.

So a fortune lies unprotected in the Windhoek gardens. As the smallest lump weighs 500 lb. there is little danger of theft.

Before the ban was imposed, some unknown prospector tried to excavate and break up the great Grootfontein meteorite. It struck the earth flat, so that its full size can be appreciated - a block of valuable metal in the wilderness. Blue marks may be seen where the prospector worked with hacksaw and blow-lamp in a vain effort to cut the tough nickel-steel composition.

Astronomers think the Grootfontein meteorite may once have formed part of the sun itself. The Germans must have known of it, but the first scientific description was given in 1929 by Dr. W.J. Luyten, of Harvard University, U.S.A. A rusty appearance tells of the intense heat caused by friction as it entered the earth's atmosphere centuries ago. It is as large as a room, and might have wreaked havoc if the district had been closely settled.

The terror with which natives must have watched the descent of this meteorite can be

imagined. A meteorite that passed over South-West Africa in 1927 was observed from Angola to Luderitzbucht, though the resting place has never been discovered. The Grootfontein meteorite would have been seen in fiery flight over a much wider area. About 80 miles from the earth a meteorite becomes luminous. Travelling at 40 miles a second, it soon reaches white heat, scorches the starry sky with its sparks, leaving a flame-red trail. Then it disappears. A few seconds later the remaining fragment crashes into the soil or the sea. Shrapnel from the sky indeed. Fortunately the atmosphere wards off the worst of the bombardment, reducing great projectiles to dust. Tons of meteoric dust settle on the earth every day. Very rarely does a large fragment thunder into the ground.

When the Prince of Wales visited Umtata in 1925, Chief Jeremiah Moshesh brought presents which included pieces of a meteorite which had fallen a few days before. The natives described this fall as 'a message from some Supreme Being to remind the people that

the great-grandson of the Great Queen Victoria was about to visit their land.' Many natives are superstitious about meteorites, however, declaring that those who go to the spot where a meteorite lies buried will die.

The legend was recalled in East Griqualand two years ago, when the fall of a meteorite was observed and the authorities learnt that a number of natives knew the exact spot. Museums had sent requests for the fragment, and the authorities tried to supply the information. In spite of a long search, however, the resting-place was not revealed. Even offers of money were refused. 'When you go to heaven it will be time enough to worry about what they have up there,' declared one old headman.

A large meteorite passed over Umtata in 1919 with a noise like a thunder-clap, leaving a trail of smoke. People in the town thought at first that there had been an aeroplane accident. A magistrate located a valley where huge iron-stone rocks had just been broken away from the mountainside; but the superstitious natives

would take him no farther and the meteorite was never found.

Astronomers like to trace meteorites, and the Union Observatory issues appeals to farmers and others to report discoveries. Great efforts were made to locate a meteorite which roared over the Northern Transvaal in 1932, and which was believed to have reached the earth, not as a shower of cosmic dust, but as a large, solid body. The size and brilliance of the meteorite suggested to Union Observatory watchers at Johannesburg that it had not fallen far away. They were anxious to examine it soon after falling - a chance astronomers rarely, if ever, have. The courses of meteorites can be plotted fairly accurately by independent observers with watches and star maps. On this occasion the reports were too vague and the astronomers were baffled again.

Meteorites often appear to be so close that observers hundreds of miles apart report what they thought to be the exact position of the fall. An air liner pilot in the United States saw a huge ball of fire apparently whizzing towards

his machine. He dived steeply and was thankful when he found he had escaped. But when the path of the meteorite was plotted, the pilot was informed that the escape was not really by a hair's breadth after all. The meteorite was 150 miles away!

III

Trees of the dawn world grow in tropical Africa. You realize immediately you see the vast trunk and mushroom branches of a baobab that there ought to be a prehistoric reptile basking in the shade. The baobab is the most weird of South-Africa's five hundred varieties of native trees.

I have seen the grotesque baobab growing beside the Zambesi; on the northern edge of the desert in Bechuanaland; in East Africa, and many odd places. Always they give to the landscape an impression of the grey breath of old age. And well they may, for these trees live longer than any other timber in the world.

The baobab, cream of tartar tree, received its botanical name (*Adansonia digitata*) as a result

of the researches of the traveller Adanson. This scientist and others identified baobabs on which early explorers had cut their names. Their calculations, made from the rings in the cross-section of the main trunk, have proved that many baobabs are more than twice the age of the Sacred Bo-Tree of Ceylon, the fig tree planted 288 years before the birth of Christ and worshipped ever since. A baobab may still stand after 5000 years. Humboldt the explorer described it "the oldest organic monument of our planet."

The bottle shaped trunk of the baobab swells out in the course of the centuries to a diameter of 30 feet. This is the most remarkable feature in size, for the height is not so impressive. About 70 feet is the maximum height. Then the soft, spongy trunk branches out into huge, nightmarish branches carrying little golden lamps of flowers.

Baobabs yield a fruit like a lemon, used by natives and many others as an antidote to fever. Monkeys love the fruit, too, and in some parts of Africa the baobab is known as the monkey bread

tree. The pink acid tasting pith of the seed capsule, pounded up and mixed with the large leaves, is believed to make stagnant water safe for drinking.

Rope and cloth are made from the bark. The wood, useless as timber, has proved ideal for the manufacture of paper pulp; and a company has been formed in South-Africa to use the baobab for that purpose. Baobabs will not be felled indiscriminately, however, as history has been written on these ancient trees. The work will be carried out under government supervision.

Many a baobab trunk has been hollowed out and used as a house. Livingstone slept in one in 1857 and declared there was room for thirty men to rest within the queer shelter. In the Northern Transvaal, baobabs growing close to villages are used as garages. During the Great War in East Africa, many a broad baobab trunk became a machine gun nest. In dry areas the natives excavate the trunks from above so that large supplies of water are stored up after the rains. Early travellers have recorded their gratitude for

this wise custom, saying that their lives were saved by the reservoirs of sweet water.

In Abyssinia and farther south, baobab trees often become tombs. Famous native chiefs are buried in the trunks; and there the bodies become mummified owing to some property of the wood. No doubt that is the reason why certain baobabs are reputed to be the homes of devils. After dark the devils lie in wait among the twisted branches for victims. Place your ear to the trunk (declare the natives) and you will hear the devils chuckling within. How they know this I cannot say, for the boldest native will pass the baobab singing in the moonlight to keep the devils at a distance, and never pausing to listen to the evil voices.

Perhaps the bees are responsible for the legend. Wild bees often perforate the soft trunk of a baobab and lodge their honey in the recesses. This is regarded by natives as the finest honey in Africa.

Probably the best-known baobab in Africa is 'The Big Tree' close to the Victoria Falls, and seen by every tourist. This should not be

confused with the tree on Livingstone Island, on which Livingstone carved his initials, at the very brink of the Falls.

The Bechuanaland Protectorate Government recently declared a baobab tree an 'historical monument' to prevent any possible mutilation. This is a tree near the Chobe river bearing the initials of a number of early travellers.

There is another baobab, standing in the Zambesi valley, which records a page of African adventure. Old hunters in the territory chose that tree as a monument to friends of the veld and bush who would hunt no more. The inscriptions read as follows:

Rider, died fever Lake Ngami 1850.

Maher, killed by Baralongs 1852.

Wahlberg, killed by wounded elephant 1857.

Dolman, died of thirst in Kalahari desert 1851.

Robinson, taken by crocodile Botetli river 1851.

Pretorius, died fever near Victoria Falls 1862.

Bonfield, killed by crocodile, Ovamboland
1861.

Burgess, blown up, gunpowder accident 1860.

If a baobab tree is cut down, say the natives, lions will surely visit the spot. A white hunter once told me that there was some ground for the belief; the water stored in the trunk would bring many wild beasts prowling round.

Truly the baobab marks the path of African adventure. They grow from the Sudan right down to the tropical frontiers of South-Africa. Strange to say, they all have that air of incredible age. There must be young baobabs somewhere in Africa, but apparently no one ever notices them. All the baobabs seem to be as old as Tutankhamen.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COAST OF DEAD SHIPS

I

Many ships have left their bones on the desert coast of South-West Africa, known to seamen as the 'Coast of Dead Ships.' A recent victim was Cape Town's oldest and most famous fishing schooner, the *Titani*. Some deserts hardly deserve the name; but the Namib Desert - scene of the *Titania* wreck - is the truest desert in South-Africa. Prospectors have described how they found skulls and skeletons in the dunes. The *Titania*'s crew were fortunate indeed. They escaped drowning in the heavy surf, and they were rescued just as they began to face the ordeal of thirst.

I remember meeting the men of the S.S. *Limpopo*, which grounded and broke up not far from where the *Titania* was wrecked. A grim story they told. Fifteen men in sodden clothes on a barren beach, with only the emergency rations of a smashed ship's lifeboat to sustain them.

Three volunteers offered to march south to Luderitzbucht for help.

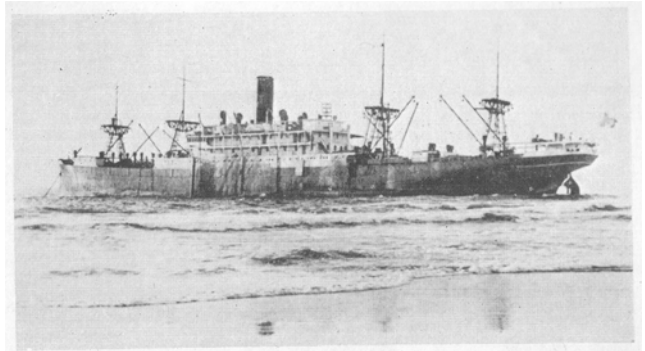
For 90 miles they struggled through soft sand, tongues swelling, lips cracking, tormented by sand-storms and sore feet, menaced by the tides, tantalized by mirages. But they staggered in at last, and a coasting steamer was sent at once to fetch the men from the forlorn camp up the coast.

Hundreds of stories of suffering might be told of that coast. Only along the Chilean coast, where it never rains, can similar conditions be found.

Experienced prospectors, however, do know a few waterholes. One of them, working 70 miles north of Luderitzbucht, told me that he dug a grave for a native labourer. There was rich diamondiferous gravel in the grave. He selected another spot and found fresh water. Too precious to waste. So he buried the native under a sand dune.

There are dunes on this weird coast that shriek when men walk over them. A beach near Luderitzbucht groans when disturbed. When the 'soo-oop-wa' wind blows, the sand sings.

Changes in the coastal sand formation have played strange tricks with the Admiralty charts, for the sea has receded and ship-masters are warned to keep clear of the treacherous shore.



ROSANDRA—A LARGE ITALIAN LINER STRANDED ON THE
TREACHEROUS SOUTH-WEST AFRICAN COAST NEAR
WALVIS BAY

Diamond washing has revealed old ocean beaches 7 miles inland. Wooden sailing ships and modern steamers may be seen clear of the breakers, embedded in the dunes. The German steamer, *Edward Bohlen*, stranded at Conception Bay in 1910 is now half a mile inland. For

years the labourers on the diamond field lived in her forecastle.

More romantic was the discovery of an old oak hull engulfed by the sand at Hottentot Bay. A prospector, looking for firewood, found V.O.C. coins (Dutch East India Company) and china ornaments among her timbers. Plans have been made by treasure-hunters to explore the wreck, but those who have seen the ship declare that excavation would be a long pick-and-shovel job. Dynamite is useless in the sand. The dunes are always on the move, driven by south-west winds. Dunes 300 feet in height are not uncommon.

Prospectors have built huts of wreckage and driftwood, and have sheltered under canvas spread over curved whale bones. At one time several expeditions equipped themselves with candles and clothes from the cargo of the steamer *Balgowan*, which lies capsized at Easter Cliffs.

Probably the most dangerous spot on the coast is Sandwich Harbour, where scores of lives have been lost through surfboats capsiz-

ing on the bar while trying to enter the lagoon. Man-eating sharks haunt the entrance. The place was known to old Portuguese navigators, and many relics of former occupations remain in the sand. Years ago, it is said, the harbour was the resort of slavers. A factory for salting fish was built, but the dunes swallowed it.



THE CAMP OF A SHIPWRECKED CREW ON THE 'COAST OF DEAD SHIPS'.

Today Sandwich Harbour is the scene of an interesting guano enterprise. There are two low islands in the lagoon which, in a good year, have yielded guano worth £10,000. Spring tides often flood the islands, however, and wash the guano away. Now a company has been formed to pump sand on to the islands and raise the levels three feet above high-water mark. It will cost £5000, and it may be worth it. An overland route for the transport of guano, to Walvis Bay has been found.

The oldest relic at Sandwich Harbour is typical of the whole desert coast. It is an old fashioned gunboat with square ports and a clipper bow, buried in the sand. Now-a-days the harbour is so shallow that no vessel of her draught could possibly anchor there.

II

Strange tales come from Swakopmund - the port built by the Germans on the edge of the Namib Desert in South-West Africa.

Recently there were sulphur eruptions along the coast which threw dead sharks and

innumerable fish on to the beaches for 40 miles. Violent south-west winds raged during these weird submarine eruptions.

Alarming sights were reported from Swakopmund a few years ago, when vivid streaks of flame shot up from the sea and a strong odour of sulphuretted hydrogen drifted into the town. On that occasion the sea turned a yellow muddy colour, bathing became unpleasant, and large bubbles in the water gave the sea an appearance of boiling.

Still earlier eruptions caused a huge column of yellow smoke to rise from the ocean, the air being filled with acrid fumes. Millions of dead fish littered the beaches. The hot east wind from the desert, called the 'soo-oop-wa', brought the stench into Swakopmund.

Most memorable of all these mysterious eruptions, however, was that which caused a mud island to appear above the surface in Walvis Bay (about 20 miles south of Swakopmund) one day in 1900. A Norwegian whaling skipper who was there at the time told me the story.

"It came up steaming hot - an island of mud and clay. We rowed round it, and estimated that it was 150 feet in length, and about 8 feet above the water. A few days later it vanished."

During that eruption several dead whales were found among the countless poisoned fish. Tidal waves occurred at the same period, an iron jetty at Swakopmund was washed away and clean breaks occurred in the submarine cables, as though the ocean bed had moved and snapped the wires.

What is the cause of these weird upheavals beneath the sea? I have seen samples of the dark mud that forms the sea floor in certain patches near Walvis Bay - mud containing sulphides. Scientists have suggested that the Kuiseb river, a sand-choked stream that reaches the sea below the surface of the land, carries the sulphides. Walvis Bay township actually lies across the underground river estuary: the houses are built on stilts to escape damage in times of flood. It is believed that a large reservoir of sulphur in the course of the river is tapped, and that this is the real cause of the eruptions in the sea.

Sulphur holes are found in the Pelican Point peninsula at Walvis Bay - the sandspit sheltering the harbour. Marvellous phosphorescent displays are seen at night. Black rain sometimes falls, the colour being drawn from deposits of magnetic iron powder on the beach to the north of Swakopmund.

Marine biologists established the fact that trawling is possible only on one small bank, 3 miles wide, in the whole enormous shallow area in the Swakopmund neighbourhood. Sulphides are not found on this bank.. All the rest of the sea floor is covered with the dark sand containing sulphides. Anchors and chain cables emerge from this sand as black as though they had just been painted.

Naturalists find much to interest them when the sea flings up mile upon mile of dead fish. There in heaps of hundreds of thousands lie sharks of many types, electric fish, huge skates, sting-rays, and sea snakes, an octopus with long tentacles, seals, and porpoises. It is like a gigantic fishmonger's slab, a morgue of the sea crying for burial.

III

Lonely harbours on the coast of Angola, so remote that they are difficult to reach at present, will soon become ports of call known to many travellers.

Two air lines, one French and the other South-African, have decided to include Angola in their new schedules. Thus the last large African colony untouched by regular air liners will be linked with the north and south.

Tiger Bay, at present almost unknown, one of the largest and finest harbours of Southern Africa, will come into its own when the flying boats alight on its calm surface.

Rhodesia is interested in Tiger Bay. That interest is still purely academic; but Mr. G.M. Huggins, the Prime Minister, has stated that Southern Rhodesia claims the right to a port on the West Coast, and would like one under its own sovereignty.

Some time in the future, perhaps, Rhodesia will attempt to acquire from Portugal a railway 'corridor' from Livingstone through Angola to the coast. There are several good harbours in

Southern Angola, but they are used solely as fishing stations and have not been developed in any way.

Tiger Bay is well situated geographically for a transfer to Rhodesia. It lies only 26 miles from the Kunene River, the boundary between Angola and South-West Africa. A cruiser from Simon's Town visited Tiger Bay recently, and it has long been a recognized anchorage for men-o'-war patrolling the African Station. Apart from such callers and local fishing and coasting craft, however, Tiger Bay receives few visitors.

Bahia dos Tigres, as the Portuguese call it, was first surveyed by officers of H.M.S. *Waterwitch* in 1894, and was found to be the largest harbour on the Angola coast. At that time leopards and elephants were common in the neighbourhood. There is an Elephant Bay farther to the north, so this port was named (inaccurately, of course) Tiger Bay. An alternative name of Great Fish Bay appears on some maps.

Tiger Bay has a barren hinterland, similar to the coastal desert farther south, so that it never became a modern port like Lobito Bay.

Nevertheless, it is well protected by the Tiger Peninsula, a sandspit 20 miles long, only a few feet above sea-level, and running parallel with the coast. The bay is 6 miles wide at the entrance, decreasing to 2 miles at the southern end. There are no submerged dangers, apart from sandbanks, along the margin, and vessels may anchor in almost any part of the bay. 'You may lie in perfect safety, with one anchor ahead, all the year round,' state the old sailing directions.

Fish are abundant, but no other supplies and no fresh water are available - water is brought to the fishing stations in casks. The fish are dried and salted on the spot. The huts of the fishermen and a beacon on Tiger Point are the only aids to navigation when entering the bay. Sand hills from 300 to 500 feet high - constantly changing in appearance when the strong winds blow - fringe the eastern shore of the bay. The beaches are littered with driftwood, and sponges are found on the rocks.

As far back as 1899 the Germans planned a railway inland from Tiger Bay to serve the copper mines in the north of South-West Africa.

The scheme, it is said, veiled a German plan for the economic penetration of Southern Angola. At that time the frontier between Angola and the German frontier was not clearly defined; and apparently Germany hoped to seize Tiger Bay to replace Walvis Bay, already in the hands of the British. A sum of 3,000,000 marks was actually voted in 1914 by the German Government for the purpose.

Tiger Bay, with its area of 128 square miles, would be the most valuable of all the Angola ports if there was any natural water supply within reach. It could accommodate more than 5000 ships at the same time, while the much better known port of Lobito Bay can provide anchorage for only 70 large vessels.

Among the fish caught at Tiger Bay is the 'pungo', sometimes over 100 lb in weight - a curious fish which presses its snout against the hull of a ship at night and produces a loud drumming sound, like an organ note.

Whaling was carried on in these waters some years ago, but the stations closed down when the hunt moved south to the Antarctic.

Elephant Bay, another good anchorage to the north of Tiger Bay, was also mentioned recently in the Rhodesian Parliament. Names of ships of the Royal Navy have been left in white-washed stones near the summit of a high tableland above the bay. They can be read 15 miles off at sea, and form a conspicuous landmark. Oysters may be gathered on the rocks on either side of the bay. Here again, however; there is no water during a dry season.

Naval seamen always enjoy a run ashore at Elephant Bay to fish, bathe, and wash their clothes. The climate is healthy, and the air so clear that the coast 45 miles away can be seen from the tableland.

The extension of the Rhodesian railway system to one of these lonely but excellent ports of the Angola coast would be an interesting enterprise. Portugal has shown no inclination to part with any of her colonial territories, however, and a concession will probably be difficult to obtain unless - like the

Lobito railway - the strip and harbour remain under the Portuguese flag.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DRUMS ACROSS AFRICA

‘Boom ... ta-ra-rat ... boom!’

Across the great sounding-board of Africa comes a barbaric rhythm that has been heard for centuries, a restless throbbing in the night that will last as long as the black man beats his drums.

It comes from the distant darkness, moves like a shuddering phantom over tropical waters, leaps valleys until it has almost vanished. Then another drummer relays the dying tune. The sound goes on vigorously through the palm trees, across lakes, from village to village, taking hundreds of miles of deep bush in its stride. Africa hears and understands.

This is the ‘bush telegraph’ about which a thousand tales are told. White men know the

broad effects of drum-talk well enough; but no white man can ever hope to master all its baffling technique. It is now generally admitted that there is no thought which a clever drummer cannot express. But just as the thought processes of the African native cannot be fully probed, so the inner details of the drum-talk must remain a mystery. ¹

‘Roum... roum... roum.’ I have listened to the drums in the Congo and the Kalahari, from Accra to Mombasa. They make a fascinating study; and wherever I have travelled, I have asked the natives to bring out their drums and play them for me. All sorts of white men, from governors to ivory poachers, have told me their own experiences of the ‘bush telegraph’. I can tap the small East African ngoma drum by my side and smell the clove plantations of Zanzibar again. Listen with me to the black man’s weird communications at work.

¹ Earlier experiences of the drums are related by the *African Mysteries* (Stanley Paul)

‘Boom... boom... boom!’ War sets the drums going incessantly, with a rhythm it is impossible to mistake. In time of war the ‘bush telegraph’ achieves its greatest feats.

‘Boom... boom... boom!’ It is 1896, and General Baratieri is in Abyssinia with sixteen thousand men. Baratieri, in spite of early success, is uneasy. The tribesmen are massing against him in enormous numbers, called together by the royal lion-skin drums.

These war drums of the Emperors of Abyssinia were so heavy that one drum could scarcely be lifted by four men. Beaten in Addis Ababa, the sounds went in ever-widening circles. The twin drums of the Ras in each province passed on the mobilization order to the outer marches. In a day Galla horsemen, swordsmen, spears, and rifles were gathering for the attack. ‘Mow down, mow down,’ urged the drums. The Italian brigade was cut to pieces. By the next night African tribes thousands of miles away had heard the story of the Italian defeat.

Nearly forty years later the Abyssinian drums sounded again, bravely enough; but in the end

the news they gave was of Italian victory. The rapidity with which incidents in the Abyssinian War of 1935 were reported among tribes to the south and west might, of course, be explained by wireless. But there were no radio receivers in the African bush in 1896. The drums outstripped the cables by weeks.

Similarly, during the Boer War and the campaign of 1906 against the rebellious Zulus, news travelled faster than the British heliographs and field telegraphs could carry it. Never a Zulu chief was slain but word reached kraals and towns far from the fighting area within a few hours. Such events were recorded and verified again and again by reliable observers.

‘Dum... dum... dum.’ It is 1911, at the barracks of the King’s African Rifles in Nyasaland. Suddenly there is an outburst of wailing from the women’s quarters. The native troops are away in Somaliland, rounding up the Mullah. And the lamenting women declare that their men have just been in action with heavy losses. They name the widows among them. When

the official casualty list arrives, days later, the ‘bush telegraph’ list is found to be correct.



OVAMBO DRUMMERS

It is said that the fall of Khartoum and the death of Gordon were known to British officials in West Africa the same day - via the drums. The rising of Lobengula and the Matabele impis in 1893 was

reported almost immediately far beyond the Zambesi. British intelligence officers were fully aware of the part played by Prempeh's wooden drums during the war of 1895 in Ashanti.

Throughout the Great War in Africa the 'bush telegraph' probably covered the greatest distance and worked at the most feverish pace. The Congolese are among the most expert drummers; and many black soldiers from the Belgian Congo were sent against the Germans in East Africa. News of fighting spanned the continent from the Lakes to Boma in a day.

A noteworthy event which set the drums talking far and wide, making a deep impression on the African mind, was the death of the 'Great White Queen.' The announcement of Queen Victoria's death, of course, reached West Africa by cable; but the manner in which it spread from the coast, beyond the telegraph lines, was remarkable. Scores of white officials heard the news from their servants.

I am told that results of boxing matches for the world's championship between black men and white have been broadcast by 'bush telegraph' The

Jeffries Johnson prize-fight, a shock to white prestige in Africa, is supposed to have been tapped out by the drums; also the victory of Joe Louis in 1937. But I am doubtful, because the 'bush telegraph' is obviously confined to matters with which African natives are familiar, and there are no boxing matches in the remote bush. It is difficult to check the truth of any such report, however, in these days when the loneliest places have the best wireless sets. Among the modern uses of the drums, however, are some devised by white men to suit their own needs. Missionaries summon their followers by drum message. A typical example was supplied to me by a Roman Catholic priest who had started a farm settlement, and wished the distant tribesmen to come down the river and burn grass. They arrived at the right time with the right equipment - large palm branches for beating out the flames when the desired area had been cleared.

A young Canadian who worked his way from Cairo to Cape Town in five months (at a total cost of £20) described another ingenious adaptation of the drums to me. He passed over a

stretch of 10 miles in the Belgian Congo where a new road was being built. There was room for only one car at a time, so the native workmen stationed drummers along the road to signal the passage of the cars.

Traders use the drums to communicate with outlying stores. One man I know was successful in telling a fellow trader that a cable had arrived summoning him to London by the first ship. He had to paraphrase the instructions, of course, and make the liner 'one big canoe too much.' London could only be translated into drum talk as 'big village belong white man over big water.'

Captains of river steamers on the Congo send messages every day by drum. The stern-wheelers burn wood fuel, and the drums advise the fuel stations along the river when the ship will arrive and how much wood she will need. Word often arrives about passengers waiting for the ship. I was on board the *Prince Leopold* on the Lualaba when speed was increased to reach a white family with a sick child. They all came on board, just as the drums had announced, and left the ship farther north at the nearest hospital.



S.A.R. & H. photo

ZULU ORCHESTRA PLAYING FOR A DANCE IN A RAND
MINE COMPOUND

Motorists in certain lonely areas of Africa have had cause to be grateful to the drummers. Two Frenchmen, brothers, organized a transport service in the Stanleyville district some years ago. One of them was 150 miles out of Stanleyville when he burst a tyre and found that he could not repair the damage. His brother

arrived next day with the 'new wheels' mentioned in the drum message.

I know of a more serious emergency in which a fairly intricate message was sent by 'bush telegraph.' Two professional elephant hunters fell out with an insolent chief, and they were worried about their guns and ivory, which they had left at a camp down the river. The trouble was described in drum talk, and their possessions were hidden by friendly natives before the chief could seize them.

As I have mentioned before, the drums cannot express ideas or send names with which natives are unfamiliar. They can overcome the barriers of native language - and there are more than 600 languages and dialects in Africa. But you cannot ask the drummer to call up Mr. Simpson, let us say, unless Mr. Simpson has a native nick-name. He might possibly overcome the difficulty by tapping out the equivalent of 'Bwana Shimi-shono,' which would be the native pronunciation of Simpson. His task would be much easier, however, if Mr. Simpson wore an eyeglass, or walked with a limp; for then every native within

a radius of hundreds of miles would have heard of the man.

Every territory must have a *lingua franca* of the drums. It is well known that there are many secret languages in Africa; probably these languages are adapted for the 'bush telegraph.' Drum talk is not a Morse code. The drums literally talk, and the throbbing that has mystified generations of white men must be an African Esperanto. Border tribes would be capable of switching from one Esperanto to another when messages of first-rate importance are relayed across the continent.

'Boom... boom... boom!' The notes are loud now, for we are approaching the drummer himself in a West African village.

He is beating the town drum - a great hollow log, 12 feet in length and hideously carved. A long slit, and the shaping of the 'lips,' control the notes of the drum. This is age-old, marvellous craftsmanship, on a par with the skill required to cast a bell. The 'lips' give the drum two voices, one male and one female. A last-minute error in

the carving of a wooden drum would ruin the work of months.

The town drum stands apart under a roof of thatch. In many villages the drummer, like a temple priest, has no other occupation. If he is a clever man, it is difficult to replace him. There was a time in the Belgian Congo when a drummer who made a serious blunder in transmitting his chief's messages was punished by having his hands chopped off.

The Ashantis prefer leather drums. Their 'bush telegraph' consists of two drums, often beaten with the hands. These drums vibrate with such violence that a man who fails to keep in rhythm may have his shoulder dislocated.

Watch the drummer at work, and you will see his face twist and grimace with every note struck. I have never succeeded in following this procedure, though it seems probable that there is a link between the contortions and the drum message.

Drums, of course, are used for many other purposes. It is said with truth that the drum is the African native's gramophone and orchestra,

besides being his radio, telephone and telegraph. Much trivial gossip goes by drum. Births and deaths, feasts, fishing, hunting exploits may make news only within a short radius. Dance drums I saw in West Africa were headed with leather, shaped like capstans, and beaten with pellets of crude rubber to give the 'ruffle' effect. Every large canoe on the Congo carried a drummer to encourage the paddlers. In East Africa I heard the Swahili saying: "When you play the drums in Zanzibar, all Africa as far as the Lakes dances."

Grim drums are those made for magic purposes - for rain making and success in war. The tribesmen of the Zoutspansberg mountains in the Northern Transvaal once treasured a set of five notorious drums - the 'Dikomana,' now housed in the Pretoria Museum. Three centuries ago the man who made them was not allowed to live to hear them. His leg-bone was placed in the largest drum. Moradu, Pau, Maditsi, Todiane, and Bopampane; those were the resounding names of the massive wood and ox hide 'Dikomana' drums. No white man ever set eyes

on them until the tribe rose in revolt against President Kruger's Government, and the sacred drums were captured.

The custom of consecrating an important drum by human sacrifice was common in many parts of Africa last century. It was believed that a drum could not 'cry out' properly unless a human voice had been heard in death agony within the drum.

'Tam... tang... tam!' Even the yellow-skinned Hottentots and Bushmen of the south have their drums. Under a full Kalahari moon you may listen to the roaring of a rommelpot. The Basutos play conical wooden murumbu drums; the Zulus cover baskets with skin; the Kaffirs tap their calabash drums. Smoke fires and drums together are employed by certain Bechuanaland tribes for signalling.

The drums of Africa are not confined to the tribes I have mentioned. A hunter who spent years in the French Congo told me that he was marching through a territory devastated by sleeping sickness and abandoned by the tribes. He heard a faint tattoo, a beating of sticks on

hollow wood. Turning to his gun-bearer he said: "I thought you told me there were no people here?"

The native smiled. "Sokomatu," he replied.

They marched towards the sound, and there the hunter saw "Sokomatu" (just like a man) - a chimpanzee drumming happily on a log.

'Tom... tom... boom ... ta-ra-rat... boom! 'No wonder a white man cannot move in the African bush without news of his march going ahead. Somewhere tonight a savage is hammering out that barbaric rhythm. Faintly comes the reply - so faint, perhaps, that he can read it only as we fill in the gaps in a half-heard, remembered tune.

The white man hears and that is all. 'Boom... ta... ra... rat... boom!' Africa hears and understands.

CHAPTER NINE

HEAT

Every summer in Africa, where most of my thirty-nine years have been spent, I have to remind myself that there are hotter places on the surface of the earth.

You do not have to live in the tropics, of course, to know something about heat. The New Yorker has a fair idea what the equator is like, though air-conditioned New York does not fit my definition of a hot spot. I have been in territories where it was impossible, by any form of human ingenuity, to keep cool. This is my tale of heat, raking and merciless heat, and how people survive it.

For meteorological purposes, the official hottest spot in South-Africa is a memorable little oasis called Goodhouse, and it lies between two deserts. Run your finger along the Orange River and you will be sure to find it. Year after year the fine old man who lives at Goodhouse - Carl Weidner, farmer, author,

African pioneer - records his sizzling temperatures. Often it is 117 degrees in the shade of Weidner's orange trees, and 154 in the desert beyond.

Goodhouse, in the valley of the Orange River, is nature's own oven, reflecting heat from mountains that no one has ever had the energy to climb, from a surrounding ocean of sand where men have died of thirst. Never a breeze reaches the vine-hung homestead. Yet Weidner and his wife and pretty daughters have lived there happily for many years. Goodhouse stands on the 1000 mile road from Cape Town to Windhoek. Every traveller stops there for refreshment before running his car on to Weidner's ferry to cross the river and enter South-West Africa. This farm in the rich river silt, like a green ribbon across a baking expanse of brown, is the half-way house on a journey that often amounts to torture. Many a night have I slept on the hospitable Weidner stoep without a blanket. The intensely dry heat, dropping to 98 degrees at night, is tolerable

then. I have been in far more uncomfortable places than Goodhouse.

Moist heat is almost killing when it reaches the temperature of Goodhouse. Port Sudan and the moist malarious hinterland have, in my opinion, the most exhausting, roasting climate in Africa. In that territory the shade temperature is often 117 degrees, and it seldom falls below 90. Dust storms add to the misery. Government officials are granted three months' leave a year to recover from the ordeal.

At sea, heat should not be so overpowering, yet every voyager on the Indian Ocean and Red Sea must possess memories of soul-scorching days and feverish midnights. The story, often told, of ships with the wind astern that turn round for a few minutes to find relief, is perfectly true. Yet the wind in the Red Sea, ahead or astern, is like the hot air the barber blows on your head after a shampoo.

Ice and fans do little to lessen the torment that the Red Sea can be. You enter this sullen waterway through the 'Gate of Tears' and you

emerge after 1100 miles at Suez, white and listless. The shipping tracks of the Red Sea are long graveyards of people who have stayed out East too long and could not endure this final misery.

Africa's hottest nights are those which stifle the residents of Red Sea ports. Life is bearable only at sunset and for an hour at daybreak. You may yield to a suffocating blanket of sleep after lunch, but you will wake up unrefreshed.

Anyone who has travelled in the Congo river steamers will recall feverish midnights. By day the movement stirs up the sluggish tropical air, but when the ship ties up for the night the full weight of the crushing climate descends like a blow. Mosquito nets are essential, and these curtains add to the discomfort, though it must be admitted that they are useful in keeping rats off the beds. Passengers lie sleepless until the blessed dawn, when the ship moves on and the boys bring tea.

One resident of Livingstone, near the Victoria Falls - desperate after many sweltering, sleepless nights - took the mattress off his bed, placed an

electric fan beneath, and lay down on the wire springs. Probably he was much cooler than the small white population of Tete in Portuguese East Africa, a notorious hot spot. The town was founded four centuries ago, and white exiles have been cursing the heat ever since. A friend who was once forced to spend a fortnight there became so worried by the sleepless nights that he went to the Honorary British Consul (a Portuguese) and asked for advice.

"Drink - then you will sleep," suggested the Consul.

"How can I drink with whisky 3s. a tot, soda 3s., and beer 3s. 6d. a bottle?" inquired my friend.

"Drink vino tinto," was the reply.

"I can't - it burns my mouth."

"Mix water with it."

My friend bought a demijohn of the strong red wine, and, as he said, "went out like a candle." That is real heat. One of the handicaps in defeating the heat in Africa is the modern crazy dressiness which may now be observed in areas as remote as the Northern Rhodesia - Congo frontier. Khaki shirts and shorts are fighting a battle with

the lounge suit. Old-timers in tropical Africa would not care to see the smarter clothes which men and women are wearing in lands where tattered khaki or dingy white drill were once the only fashions.

Some years ago I shared a liner's cabin, from Mombasa to London, with a red-bearded pioneer whose entire wardrobe consisted of an enormous, battered sun-helmet, an old Norfolk jacket, a few khaki shirts, riding-breeches, blue puttees, and mosquito boots. Such had been his outfit for years in 'the blue,' and I remember the stir he caused at the reception desk of a London hotel.

Nevertheless, my friend was treated with the greatest respect as a sort of Allan Quartermain back from the jungle. He saw no reason to purchase new clothing, apart from a cloth cap, during the first few days in London. Then he decided to shave. These changes were deplorable - they robbed London of a figure of romance, the red beard beneath the brim of a helmet that had known a hundred adventurous safaris.

That pioneer, and his attitude to clothes, were typical of generations of hard-living white men in Africa. There were no white women in the fever belts in their day. They found it unnecessary to dress for dinner to maintain their morale. Clothes were simply worn until they disintegrated, and no man was judged by the cut of his khaki shirt.

The arrival of white women in places where long residence formerly meant certain death is working a disturbing change. I, for one, did not welcome it when I stepped off the train on the Northern Rhodesia-Congo frontier recently to visit the great copper mines. Before dinner in the hotel - that night I had to change hurriedly - my khaki shorts would have made me extremely conspicuous in the modern dining room. Some of the men at the hotel went khaki-clad to work in the morning; but most of them would have passed unnoticed in a London street.

In Bulawayo signs of a return to pioneer comfort have been observed. Some years ago the Rhodesian Railways broke the tradition of

a free-and-easy country by insisting on more formal clothing in their offices. Railway officials became known as the 'collar and tie brigade.' Now the railways have given their clerks permission to work again in open-neck shirts and shorts. The spirit of the spacious days has returned.

Rhodesian bank clerks, too, may pore over their ledgers with cool knees. A client escorted 'behind the scenes' will often find cashiers correctly dressed to the waist, but ready for golf, shooting, or tennis from the waist down. The counter hides many a pair of plus-fours, riding-breeches, or white shorts.

At night the man who wears a soft shirt and white mess jacket instead of uncomfortable black is no longer conspicuous. Salisbury, however, clings to custom more tenaciously than Bulawayo. It is said with some truth: "There are more boiled shirts to the square inch in Salisbury than in any other town in the Rhodesias."

Men in Beira solve the sweltering summer problem by frequent changes of clothing. The

whites worn before breakfast are discarded before the toil of the day. In the middle of the morning native servants arrive at the offices with fresh white suits. At lunch time, and again in the afternoon, master calls for clean raiment. It is part of his personal 'boy's' duties to wash and iron the discarded clothing of the day. No man goes to a dance in Beira without several spare shirts and collars. During each interval he finds a clean mess-jacket waiting for him.

Farther north in East Africa the 'bush shirt' is the white man's answer to the merciless tropical sun. This extremely masculine garment has an open neck, four pockets with flaps (large enough for bullets and beer), and is allowed to hang outside the fashionable khaki shorts. It is a shirt and jacket in one, usually worn without a vest. Indian tailors in Tanganyika, having made a 'bush shirt,' alias 'safari jacket,' for a customer, are often ready to toss double or quits in settlement.

Hot-weather hats form a separate chapter. In South-Africa a man needs a hat, not because of any risk of sun stroke, but to protect his eyes

from glare. In South-West Africa cardboard sun-helmets, fixed in position with elastic, are being widely worn. They cost 2s. apiece. The two-gallon Tom Mix hat with enormous brim is a favourite in the hot open spaces.

But the 'double *terai*' of grey or khaki - two felt hats stuck one inside the other for greater protection in deadly sunlight - this monstrosity of the tropics is passing rapidly. Women wore them as the only alternative to the sun-helmet. They discovered that the prettiest frock lost its charm when worn below the hated 'double *terai*.'

When white men gather in the evening anywhere east of Suez a strange parade of dinner clothes is seen. Here are local fashions that are entirely correct in Calcutta or Colombo-fashions that would startle Europe.

The orthodox dinner suit has been transformed by the steamy heat of the East. Each city and seaport has evolved its own variation. Night in a Colombo hotel, where so many travellers meet, brings forth a mixture that is baffling to the new-comer.

I sorted them out with the aid of an old hand. The man with a black jacket and white trousers, I learnt, was undoubtedly from Calcutta. He wore the hot weather uniform of a city where heavy black clothes would be intolerable.

Calcutta, however, enjoys a 'cold snap'; a period from 15 November to 15 March, when the night temperature is just cool enough to make one blanket bearable on the bed. So on 15 November the electric punkahs are turned off. Then fashionable Calcutta wears black dinner jackets and black trousers, with 'tails' when the Governor is present and on other formal occasions.

During the rest of the year, and especially during those aching, merciless nights before the monsoon breaks, comfort is the first thought. A cummerbund replaces the hot waistcoat. Shirts, and sometimes even collars, are soft. Dress conventions cannot survive when the mercury reaches 110 degrees - and stays there.

In Bombay, in Colombo, and many parts of East Africa, the correct dinner dress is a smart starched white mess jacket with a point at the

back, worn with black trousers. Travel further east and 'all whites' become the rule. Thus I was able to recognize men from Singapore and Shanghai, Hong Kong and the China coast.

No finger of scorn is pointed at a white waistcoat worn with a black dinner jacket in these sweltering latitudes. But you need a strong nerve to enter a Calcutta cinema for the 9.30pm session in your day clothes. They dress for the pictures as punctiliously as a West End theatre audience.

Although comfort comes first, there are rigid rules governing cool clothes. You may go to work in a sports shirt and shorts in Colombo; but in Calcutta the right attire consists of a light brown silk jacket and white trousers. Men in Colombo wear white shorts for tennis, khaki shorts for golf. Calcutta prefers blue on the links. In tropical Africa, shorts are turned up - in India never.

Even the sun helmet is not immune from the Indian laws of fashion. Shield the back of your neck with a helmet of any shape, any colour, on informal occasions; but wear a

white helmet of old-fashioned design at Government House or your head will be more conspicuous than those wearing turbans and red fezes.

Fortunately tropical clothing is cheap. A light-weight dinner suit of the approved pattern is made to measure for less than £3 in Calcutta. There are eastern ports where collars and socks cost so little that men wear them once and throw them away to save the laundry charge.

Outside military and official circles, wherever lonely men dine together in bungalows, the custom of 'dressing to maintain prestige and morale' has gone by the board. Drop in on your friends the sugar planters, the tea growers, the bank mess, and you will find them round the table in pyjamas. As a rule it is far too hot for anything else.

I must not forget one more free-and-easy custom observed in Rangoon. There the well-dressed man may rest his aching feet by going to the cinema in slippers.

In all these hot countries, where clothes must be changed several times a day, life would be intolerable without a 'bearer.' The personal servant cannot alter the climate, but he does make life less irritating. You can fling down a crumpled suit and find fresh clothes laid out, not only in your bedroom but in the office. Indian offices are equipped with shower baths. The bearer arrives at the right moment during a tiresome afternoon, with the right clothes. As Kipling said:

*'There's nothing in Ind so sweet as a plung
In a jolly big bath with a jolly big sponge.'*

This is especially true in Calcutta, where the shade temperature during at least two months of the hot season ranges over 100 degrees. Calcutta is a city of dreadful nights indeed, when millions are waiting for the monsoon to break, and the air is filled with warm moisture. Every week there are hundreds of deaths caused directly by the merciless heat. Every night you may see the Hindu funeral pyres flaming along the Hooghly.

Until the rains come, the heat is a pestilence, and a night's rest is a luxury almost impossible to secure.

Hotel bedrooms in India are designed to defeat the heat. Most of them are as bare as hospital wards. Everything is sacrificed to coolness. Ceilings are high, floors are of stone, the punkah over the bed is as large as an aeroplane propeller, and the black-painted iron bedstead is equipped with an extremely hard mattress.

A luke-warm bath at bed time is recommended as a method of inducing sleep. Pyjamas are condemned as uncomfortable. White men in the Far East wear sarongs - a sort of loose scarf wrapped twice round the body and tucked in at the waist. This leaves the arms and legs free and exposed to every cool breath of air. Then there is the 'Dutch wife,' a long bolster found on almost every hotel bed east of Suez, and used for spreading the guest's legs. Bed clothes are unnecessary and intolerable under the mosquito-net.

One of the odd sights of Calcutta may be observed late in the afternoon on the Royal

Calcutta Turf Club course. It is the hour when the sun is no longer a menace. In the members' enclosure a ripple passes over the throng as though a sudden wind had blown off a thousand sun helmets. The men are simply exchanging their helmets for felt hats carried by a thousand faithful bearers.

I engaged a bearer in Calcutta for a journey to the Himalayas, a venerable Moslem named Mowla Buksh. Travelling from Calcutta to Darjeeling is very much like stepping out of a Turkish bath into cold storage. So I did not grudge Mowla Buksh the 'warm clothing allowance' of 10 rupees which is the custom of India when you take your bearer to the hills. Of course the wily Mowla had drawn that allowance again and again that season from different visitors, and I did not notice him purchasing many pullovers. But it is the custom of the country.

At Darjeeling I wore a leather coat and a winter suit. I carried that coat for three months and wore it for two days, with a sun helmet, at an altitude of 7500 feet. It is a strange sensation, rattling down the mountain railway from

Darjeeling to Siliguri, shedding clothes as the train takes you into warmer and warmer belts of air.

After a few weeks in India and Burma I learnt to recognize the men of the East by their clothes. Goans, the lights skinned people from Portuguese India, cling to antiquated Derby hats - a cross between a top hat and a bowler; while the more prosperous Goans like to gain possession of a frock coat. In general, however, there is little of that imitation of the white man which delights the African native. The Indian prefers the costume of his race and caste. Millions of thin-legged coolies solve the dress problem by wearing nothing at all above the waist.

The Bengali baboo mixes West and East with a European jacket and a *dhoti*, a clumsy cotton shirt looped between the legs. The *dhoti* must not be confused with the *dhobi* - the villainous Hindu who pesters you for laundry work and does more damage than any other laundryman in the world. You pay him 10 rupees a month for any quantity of washing. The custom of employing a

full-time *dhobi* as one of the household staff is dying out.

The *dhobi* has secret sidelines of his own to increase his earnings: He will hire the sahib's clothes to a thrifty Anglo-Indian (formerly known as a Eurasian), and charge no more than four annas for the privilege. Sometimes the *dhobi* himself arrives in a silk suit of distinguished cut. Accuse him of wearing the clothes of a customer and he will shrug and say: "Washing to-day, sahib, giving back tomorrow!"

I believe that Chandernagore, on the River Hughli above Calcutta, ranks as the hottest place in the world. This is France's smallest colony, too, for it stretches for only 3 miles along the Hughli and one mile inland. Such claims to distinction do not make Chandernagore any more pleasant. I was there in the winter, and the atmosphere was nerve wracking.

Aden, however, will not allow Chandernagore's claim to pass unchallenged. When I went on shore at Aden one night, and sat half-fainting under the punkahs, I asked a white resident how he contrived to sleep. "I just pour a

jug of water over the bed, and try to doze before it evaporates," he replied.

Men who have served in the Persian Gulf claim to have experienced the hottest nights in the world. Two summers is the limit fixed for naval service in the Gulf - the white man's constitution can stand no more. It is necessary to sleep with a towel under each arm to avoid prickly heat. At the worst periods men cease to sweat. They feel as though all the moisture had been baked out of them. Night brings no relief.

When the 'date-ripeners' wind blows up the Gulf, the thermometer rises to 129 degrees in the shade. The air is so humid that the water condenses on mosquito nets and drips on to the sleepers below. In the sloops of the Royal Navy, patrolling the Gulf, it is not unusual for half an engine-room staff to be on the sick list at the same time as a result of heat-exhaustion.

Australia's hottest town is Marble Bar, in the grim north-west, a mining settlement built among ironstone hills that trap the heat. All winds reach Marble Bar from the desert - super-heated. One summer there were ninety consecu-

tive days on which the temperature was over 103 degrees.

Men who feel the heat most severely, I am sure, are the British soldiers stationed in the North-West Frontier of India. During a campaign there, in the month of May, the unhappy soldiers found the minimum temperature (at dawn) was never below 110 degrees; while the maximum was often 130 in the shade. They marched at night, sometimes covering 17 miles during the dark hours. Those men had a right to grumble.

Siam feels hot because the average temperature throughout the year is 84 degrees. It must have been in Bangkok that Mark Twain first explained the difference between the hot and cold seasons; weather hot enough to melt a brass door-knob, and weather simply hot enough to be uncomfortable.

Let us follow the heat round the world, along that imaginary line that is the world's symbol of heat. How many times have you crossed the equator? Most people can answer immediately, or with a simple effort of memory. Sir Abe Bailey, the legless, seventy-five year old South-

African millionaire, recalled recently that he had crossed the line one hundred and four times - a high score for an ordinary liner passenger.

Strange to say, there are many travellers (apart from professional seamen) who have lost count entirely of their movements from hemisphere to hemisphere. I remember meeting a trader from Uganda on board ship one sweltering morning when the track chart showed that we had just passed the invisible boundary.

"Crossed the line often?" I asked him.

"Thousands of times - every day, in fact, when I was in Uganda," he replied. "You see, the equator cuts bang through my trading station."

It was for the same reason that I lost count of my own equator crossings. I was steaming down the Congo in an old stern-wheeler when I came to the town once known as Equatorville, now Coquilhatville. The line passes right through the white houses of this ill-favoured outpost. There is one villa at least in which the people eat in the northern hemisphere and cross the line to sleep. I went for a motor drive round about 'Coq' in the cool of the evening, crossing the line again and

again. Let me assure you that the novelty soon wears off.

During the same Belgian Congo journey I crossed the equator by train. A narrow-gauge line runs from Ponthierville, round 80 miles of rapids, to link up at Stanleyville with the next section of navigable river. The crazy tropical train, with its narrow cane seats and wood-burning engine, covers the distance in eight hours. I was thirsty on that equatorial night, but I could find no water for drinking or washing.? There are better ways of crossing the equator.

The Silverbeck Hotel at Nanyuki, Kenya, provides a better way. Some years ago a retired naval officer made a series of careful calculations with sextant, chronometer, and tables. He was then able to show the hotel proprietor that the Equator passed straight through the bar. A strip of sealing-wax marks the position on the mahogany bar counter to this day. There is no fake about it. Drinkers amuse themselves by crossing and recrossing the Equator between 'sundowners,' no doubt

devising many a little ceremony as they 'cross the line' with glasses in their hands.

From Nanyuki you can see snow on the Equator. The little town lies on the slopes of Mount Kenya, and snow lies always on the peaks. Thus it is possible to go skiing and snowballing on the Equator, 15,000 feet above the plains.

Boards on the roads in East Africa inform the motorist that he is crossing the line. This usually means a photograph, with one daring explorer after another standing astride the Equator. You find the same thing in Sumatra, where an impressive obelisk marks the spot.

There is an Equator Station on the Kenya-Uganda railway, a cool place 8706 feet above sea-level. Another place where the Equator is not allowed to pass unrecognised is La Belle Alliance Club in Pontianak, Dutch Borneo. The line runs through the billiards-room, marked in white across the floor and over the green baize of the table.

Few towns, however, lie right in the path of the Equator. Follow it round the world, from

where it cuts the lonely and desolate Galapagos Islands, westwards through the Gilbert group, along its watery path to Borneo. The line pierces Sumatra and then goes clear across the Indian Ocean to Africa without touching land. Kismayu on the coast of Italian Somaliland almost marks the spot where the Equator enters Africa. It emerges on the far side slightly to the south of Libreville, just misses the cocoa island of San Thome, and crosses the empty South Atlantic.

In Brazil the Equator comes to earth again at the mouth of the Amazon, penetrates the unknown jungles, almost touches Quito in Ecuador, but completes its journey of 24,901 miles without encountering a city anywhere.

Air liner passengers crossing the Equator nowadays receive a handsome certificate, without any nonsense about Father Neptune. The Imperial Airways flying boats cross the line over Lake Victoria in East Africa, and also on the Australian run to the south of Singapore.

Lady Cobham was the first woman ever to cross the Equator by air. That was during one of her husband's African survey flights. Sir Alan

and Lady Cobham opened a bottle of champagne in mid-air to celebrate the event. Not long ago there was a steamer on Lake Victoria that had crossed the Equator more than two thousand five hundred times. She was the famous little *Clement Hill*, built in England, sent out in parts, and assembled on the edge of the lake at Kisumu in 1906. She was scrapped in 1937, but during her quarter of a century of work she crossed the Equator at least a hundred times a year. The Duke of Windsor (when Prince of Wales) was among her passengers.

One fallacy about the Equator ought to be dispelled. It concerns the famous ceremony on board ship, when Father Neptune arrives, a canvas bath is rigged, and all new-comers are shaved and ducked. If this should happen to you, please do not believe that the possession of a decorated certificate, relic of some previous voyage, will save you from the ordeal. Father Neptune sometimes glances at it and barks: 'Out of order.'

Whereupon you cross the line in good old-fashioned style, with soap and salt water in your

astonished mouth, and the Equatorial sun burning overhead.

CHAPTER TEN

STRANGE FARMS OF AFRICA

I

Man's struggle to win a living from the soil of Africa makes as many strange tales as the *Arabian Nights*. Here is scope for all the whims and eccentricities of the human race. In the most remote corners one finds farms which are filled with surprises, and farmers whose ingenuity has saved them from defeat.

There is a farmer in Bushmanland, one of the driest, hottest stretches in South-Africa, who found that the land he had bought could not supply grazing for his sheep. He looked round - undismayed, and thought of the salt crystals that had evaporated from the water from his wells. With donkeys and primitive machinery he turned his farm into a salt mine, producing tons of

coarse salt at 4s. a bag. That side-line carried him profitably through the drought.

The same principle has been applied in a very different way by farmers along the Pongola River in Zululand. In difficult times they rely on their rifles, sending crocodile skins to market instead of ordinary farm produce. Many farmers catch snakes alive for zoos, and kill pythons for the skins that make beautiful shoes and handbags.

Near Mossamedes, in Angola, there is a farmer who has stocked his private zoo with animals caught within his own boundaries - lions, leopards, and many varieties of antelope.

Two farms in the Belgian Congo are devoted to the training of African elephants as farm labourers - an enterprise which has been successful in India, but was long regarded as impossible in Africa. The Belgian effort started in 1900. Young elephants were captured, taught to kneel and rise, and then harnessed for traction work. One elephant can draw a load of three tons, or a three-furrow plough, a task for which a span of fourteen oxen would be needed. In the

Congo, elephants carry timber and pull out tree stumps. Sweet potatoes are given as rewards.

An elephant trained on these farms is valued at £350 to £500. In a land where petrol is expensive, owing to great distances and transport difficulties, the hard-working elephant is a sound proposition. Two good elephants will plough two acres in a morning.

Roman Catholic missionaries in Africa are great farm workers, and many a pleasant scene remains to their credit in lonely surroundings. One of the most isolated stretches of Africa lies along the Okavango River, between South-West Africa and Rhodesia. There, at Andara, the German priests have built a reproduction of a Rhineland grain mill, water-wheel, and rose garden. This enterprise is typical of the energy displayed by mission fathers in places where no one else would have attempted such work. I have happy memories of Pella in Bushmanland - a church, white walls and cool gardens, grapes and date palms in the midst of a brown wilderness.

In the same territory there are farmers who live in their wagons, the trek-Boers of the North-

West Cape. Theirs is the endless quest for grass; they are nomads by compulsion. Children are born under the canvas wagon tents. They carry everything with them, travelling year after year, never able to settle for long.

A typical Boer farming settlement may be found at Eldoret, in Kenya, 2000 miles from the northern border of the Union. Strange it is to find buildings and people transplanted from the South-African veld to the tropics - and flourishing there. The town, with its churches, houses, and shops, forms a strong contrast with the essentially English design of other Kenya settlements. It was founded about thirty years ago, and now there are two thousand Afrikaners in the territory, raising cattle and crops.

The saddest farms in South-Africa are those which have been proclaimed as diamond diggings, worked out, and abandoned. Sometimes the farmer profits by his 'owner's right'; often he does not. But nothing will grow again in the fields that have been littered with gravel and pock-marked with holes left by the diggers.

Africa's queerest farm stands near the summit of an extinct volcano nearly 3000 feet above the sea on Ascension Island. The rest of this South Atlantic outpost is a waterless desert of volcanic dust and lava. Green Mountain, however, catches moisture from the clouds and supports a farm which supplies the people of the cable station below with fruit, pork and lamb, eggs, sweet potatoes, and green vegetables.

Mountain House, they call this cool oasis in the clouds. It is reached by mule-cart or on horseback, through groves of bamboo and banana trees, and the solid stone building might have been transported from the English country-side. Here an old naval pensioner has found a comfortable anchorage. Bungalows close by are the favourite (and only) week-end resorts of the cable exiles.

II

One of the strangest farming enterprises in the world - Cannon Island, in the Orange

River, South-Africa - has just received 'home rule.'

This step has been taken by the Union Government in recognition of the remarkable progress of the island community. Twelve years ago fifty land-hungry men seized the island in defiance of the land settlement regulations. They worked unaided and refused to be ejected. Today their achievements stand as an inspiration to the whole farming population of the Country.

When I first saw Cannon Island it was a green jungle 9 miles long, 4000 acres in extent, rising from the chocolate-coloured waters of the Orange River.

For a hundred years the Orange River islands were the strongholds of marauding Hottentot bands, the terror of lonely farmers in the Northern Cape districts. It was not until 1906, indeed, that the last of the robber chiefs was brought to justice. The valley of the Orange, filled with a jungle of thick bush, willows, and thorn trees, formed a secure hiding-place for stolen cattle. Runaway slaves from the Cape, half-caste desperadoes,

Griquas, and Hottentots - and occasionally a white renegade - made the islands their base. During their raids white farmers, women, and children were murdered.

Occasionally a brave little commando of farmers, hastily summoned, would follow the raiders; but though the murderers were sometimes punished, they usually escaped with the cattle. The most notorious robber captain of all was Afrikaner, who came under missionary influence in his old age and reformed.

German colonists on their side of the river suffered in the same way until organized campaigns against the rebellious Hereros and Hottentots put an end to the era of lawlessness.

Cannon Island gained its name during the bitter fighting of the 'seventies, when bands of native outlaws were driven from their island strongholds by the Cape Artillery.

The native bandits put up such desperate resistance at this spot that the burghers were unable to cross the river. A cannon was then mounted on a kopje to sweep the 'water jungle' where the armed black rabble lay hidden. This

attack was successful, and the northern frontier of the Cape was cleared for white settlement.

It was not until 1926, however, that the rich silt of Cannon Island tempted a group of land-hungry men to form their romantic colony. These men were mainly 'trek-Boers' - sheep owners without land of their own who were forced always to travel in their covered wagons in search of grass. Their children were born and brought up under the canvas wagon tents.

Thus the 'trek-Boers,' nomads by compulsion, spent their lives in the most desolate places. During the rare good times, when thunderstorms filled the 'pans' and the grass rustled high and yellow in the wind, the life was not unpleasant. But each winter was an ordeal. The 'trek-Boers' longed for a place where they could settle and take root. Fifty of them found their 'Promised Land' on Cannon Island.

Those early settlers tore away the thick tangle of willows amid wild olives, mimosa and vicious thorn bush. They made a weir and an irrigation canal, dug furrows and dams, chopped trees and levelled the rough island fields for the first

sowing. It was a magnificent enterprise, carried out illegally on Crown land.

So the law intervened after a time in the shape of a lore policeman who had orders to eject the settlers. The policeman was lifted off his horse, given a spade, and invited to join the settlers. He reported to the magistrate at Upington, 20 miles up the river, and the magistrate visited Cannon Island.

The settlers listened patiently to the magistrate's warning, but they went on with their toil. It was summer, the temperature, warmed by hot winds from the Kalahari, was over 100 degrees in the shade, but they rose at five each morning and worked on until darkness. They were so poor that they could not afford to hire coloured labourers. Crops of wheat and Lucerne were reaped to feed themselves and their cattle. Never was there a more industrious band of 'land pirates.'

Finally Mr. Piet Grobler, Minister of Lands in 1928, was persuaded to inspect the island. 'Oom Piet' was astonished at the transformation of the river jungle into a prosperous settlement. He

knew that hundreds of thousands of pounds had been spent by the Government in establishing irrigation settlements up and down the Orange River. Yet here were hundreds of people living without subsidies, without calling on the Government for a penny, but with every prospect of success.

After such efforts it would have been inhuman to turn the settlers away from the rich scene they had created. Mr. Grobler gave them the first of their rights and a definite promise of title in the near future.

The settlers returned to work with fresh enthusiasm. They bought steel cable and timber and built the largest pont on the Orange River. No longer were rafts necessary for transporting their produce to the river bank.

Comfortable thatched brick homes replaced the mud huts. Water-wheels ran in the gardens. The Government provided a proper school and a post office. Within a few years the indomitable penniless settlers had carried out improvements estimated at £20 000. Moreover,

their land was yielding the largest wheat and cotton crops per acre in the world.

Cannon Island survived the depression of the early 1930's. Such men as these knew how to ward off starvation, however low prices might fall. Their goats and their own fruit and vegetables kept them alive. They had vineyards and orange trees, olives, mealies, date palms, and meadows such as you will see nowhere else in South-Africa.

Then, in 1934, came the most devastating floods in living memory. The Orange River - the 'Groot Rivier,' the 'Nile of South-Africa' - roared down the thousand miles of its course, sweeping away the work and wealth of years.

Cannon Island's population had grown to about one thousand men, women, and children by this time. The long narrow island was cut up by the torrent into a chain of islands where, on the high parts, the settlers lived like castaways and prayed for help. In some places they were forced to find refuge in trees.

Hundreds gathered round the island church on the high ridge. There they made their fires

and watched with stricken eyes the river swallowing their possessions. They sang hymns and awaited deliverance.

Help came from the sky. Day after day 'planes of the South-African Air Force cruised along the river with small parachutes and parcels of food. The pilots were so skilful that few of the precious packages of meal, sugar, and coffee were lost in the river. Scores of lives were saved during the period when boats were unable to cross the raging river.

When the waters dropped, Cannon Island was a scene of desolation, and many of the settlers were homeless. Yet even the great flood could not destroy the courage of the people of South-Africa's most fertile island. They banded themselves together again, re-levelled the silt, and wisely left the old channels of the river open so that the next floods will not tear away their crops.

On Cannon Island today there are few signs of the 1934 disaster. High up in the trees you may find masses of driftwood and wreckage, like incredible birds' nests - relics left when the river covered the island. But the crops are flourishing

once more, new cattle graze where the old herds were drowned. Cannon Island has triumphed over the ordeal of the waters.

Thus the 'home rule' which will free the bold settlers from many restrictions is no more than they deserve. Government control of other settlements along the Orange River has already been withdrawn. Cannon Island will now be left to the wise government of the men who seized it and made it into a river paradise.

III

Imagine a strange new cavalcade in London - a South-African mule team galloping past the buses and taxi-cabs, drivers shouting, whips lashing and cracking over bowler hatted crowds, the wagon thundering through the Marble Arch at its top speed of 20 miles an hour.

That is a scene which may become a reality if the Union Government acts on a suggestion made at a recent country show by Colonel Deneys Reitz, Minister of Agriculture. "South-African mule teams should be sent overseas for exhibition," he said. "We could take a pride not

only in the splendid animals, but also in the magnificent manner in which mule teams are handled by South-African farmers. I hope the Government will be able to contribute towards the cost, and I shall certainly recommend that to my colleagues. It ought to be a splendid novelty in Europe."

The idea is sound, for mules are practically unknown in Britain. A veterinary surgeon told me that before he came to South-Africa almost the only mules he had seen were those drawing the tram cars between Glasgow and Govan. The horse loving English do not use mules for farming. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that a team of mules would attract as much interest in London as a pack of camels.

South-Africa is seeing a revival in the mule breeding industry at the present time. In the past there were few lands in the world more famous for sturdy mules than the Cape. Mules from the Malmesbury district served in India during the Mutiny, and regular shipments were made for the Indian Army long afterwards. Thousands of mules were shipped from the Union to East

Africa during the Great War, but I do not think one mule returned. That campaign brought South-Africa's mule population to a low figure indeed; and the spread of motor transport started the decline of mule breeding.

Nevertheless, the demand for mules did not vanish; Madagascar continued to demand mules by the ship load. An Italian veterinary surgeon arrived in the Union by air to buy a thousand mules, and before sanctions were imposed a British freighter left Durban for Italian East Africa with 874 mules on board. This was the largest shipment since the Great War. There was a delay before the ship sailed while thirty-five stable boys were recruited. An R.S.P.C.A. official travelled with the mules to see they were treated properly in the 'tween decks. Mules, as a matter of fact, are not unduly troublesome once they have been cajoled into their quarters. Rolling upsets them, but they are never seasick.

Mules, they say, have no ancestry and no hope of posterity.

Nevertheless, the mule, an 'invention of man,' can be a magnificent animal with wonderful

staying power. In South-Africa the tricks of mule driving are better understood, perhaps, than anywhere else in the world. Mules drew the Cape coaches in the days of gold and diamond rushes. Often a mare was to be seen running beside a team; for the mule will follow a mare and do the work with less whip. It seems to require a lead before making use of its great strength. One white mare with a bell round its neck will keep a hundred mules from, straying. The mule; indeed, reveals a definite bias towards its equine ancestor, and regards the donkey with disfavour.

During the South-African War two Imperial officers purchased a number of mules for the army. When the deal had been concluded they were offered two ponies to assist in driving the mules to headquarters. "Our orders were to buy mules - not ponies," replied one of the officers stiffly. They obeyed orders and lost half their mules during the journey.

The secret of driving a long span of mules in a wagon lies in the selection of good leaders and 'wheelers.' Young mules may then be placed

between and gradually broken to the task. Driving is heavy on the hands - that is why one man holds the reins and another the whip. It is a tremendous physical strain.

One expert driver I know encourages his mules by yelling the principal parts of Greek verbs, thus: "Treko dramoumai edramon dedrameeka." The word of command 'Proot!' which appears to have come from France with the Huguenots is more commonly heard. (The French still use mules in the Pyrenees, while mules are occasionally seen in carriages in Spain.) Driving a team of mules is not so easily learnt as the control of a motor car. Inspanning is often difficult. Some drivers believe in running the team round early in the morning 'to get the devilment out of them' before loading the wagon. Many hesitate to outspan at midday; they know there may be a long delay before the team is ready to move off again. While some may disagree, I believe it is generally recognized that the coloured man often extracts better work from a mule team on the farm than the farmer himself.

So the mule is once again coming into its own in South-Africa, even to the extent of competing with the railways. A fine sight it is to see four muscular mules, clothed in the typical white 'brayed' harness of the country, ploughing their two acres a day on a Western Province farm.

South-African farmers now realize that as a draught animal, capable of long spells of ploughing and hauling, the mule is unsurpassed. Prices have risen as a result of the new demand - one mule fetched, £66 at a recent Paarl sale. Great interest is being taken in the mule exhibits at the country shows. Mules, of course, are often sold in carefully matched pairs - size, weight, 'substance,' and colour being important points - and a price of £120 for a good pair is by no means uncommon. The mule pulls by the weight of its body; the shape of the limbs is of secondary importance. It is less liable to lameness than the horse, does not suffer from stomach complaints to the same extent, and flourishes on inferior feed. The mule becomes

useful at four years of age and is still young at sixteen. It is said that no one ever sees a dead mule. Certainly the longevity of the mule, and its hardiness in difficult country, are two strong points in its favour. The small feet do not suffer on hard roads.

Some of the Cape districts are peculiarly suitable as mule breeding centres, for they have the limestone formation which is assimilated in the feed and produces bone. As a riding animal, however, the mule is a poor substitute for the horse. The mule's mouth is not so fine, and it has an uncomfortable gait. No doubt many Italian troops in Abyssinia, mounted on mules, are cursing their steeds at the present time.

The obstinacy of the mule (declares my friend the 'vet') has been exaggerated. With good treatment the mule shows affection for its master and works quietly and patiently, like a donkey, with the vigour and strength of the horse. It has a voice of its own, a hoarse sound which is feeble compared with the famous kick (or bite) by which the mule displays resentment. The horse

usually gives some warning before it kicks, but the mule kicks out in all directions with alarming suddenness. It is remarkable that two such docile creatures as the horse and the donkey should have produced an animal which can be as vicious as the mule.

IV

South-Africa is spending about £300,000 this year fighting the 'eighth plague' - the locust swarms that have not yet been conquered. This is only an insect bite, however, in comparison with previous campaigns in 1934, when the largest swarms within living memory invaded the Union, £1,400,000 was flung into the front-line to kill the flying hordes. Now it looks as though the ancient menace will be defeated at last. Millions have not been spent in vain. 'Locust bait' is the secret.

Long ago it was realised that little could be done once the locusts had grown large enough to use their wings. Research workers in all African territories co-operated in this international problem, breeding places were mapped, mass

attacks were planned on the young *voetgangers* or 'hoppers.' Aerial spraying began years ago. Both civil and military aeroplanes, equipped with 'poison dust' apparatus, flew low over the swarms and gave them clouds of sodium arsenate to eat. The latest method, however, is carried out on the ground and promises success. A locust bait factory, established by the government near Pretoria, turns out 2,000 bags of poisoned mealie meal and bran every day. This is devoured by the locusts to the last scrap, leaving the veld safe for livestock.

Hungry locusts form the most inevitable, merciless pest in the world. At Kimberley years ago I watched a swarm coming up over the horizon millions strong, darkening the sun, settling on a green lawn in front of an hotel. They picked the grass clean in a few minutes; it was as though a fire had swept across the ground.

A really large swarm will cause a total eclipse of the sun lasting as long as an hour. The sight always inspires a queer, helpless feeling. It is said that a hungry swarm will eat

the wool on a sheep's back. Locusts have devoured small animals, and according to native accounts they have killed babies. They certainly eat clothes. Fortunately they are cannibals to the core, and a heap of poisoned locusts will often delay a following swarm. After the ghastly meal there are further casualties.

Even the cinema has failed to depict the full horror of the farmer who sees the locusts settling on his lands. At such times the battle seems hopeless. There are too many, the whole veld moves, there is room only for despair. Yet the locust destroyers do struggle on. Hand-sprays and fire are used in the attempt to turn the swarm away from the crops. Everywhere locusts are dying, and for each one killed ten more appear.

Natives dig trenches for hoppers, wait until they are full, and then cover the horde with earth. Such traps are made possible by the fact that the path of a swarm of hoppers, moving steadily forward at a mile an hour, can be accurately determined in advance. Nothing

save death will stop them. They will even cross rivers during their migrations in mass formation.

The locust ranks as a delicacy among most native tribes. Farmers living near native territories do not lack helpers when the swarms appear. Boiled in water and dried in the sun, the preserved locust, rich in protein, becomes a tasty meal in many a kraal. Dried locusts are also sold by farmers to manufacturers of poultry foods. The main difficulty lies in killing them without using poison. Steam will do the trick - drowning will not.

Sometimes the swarms visit the cities of South-Africa. In 1933 a large swarm landed in the streets of Johannesburg during the lunch hour. Women dashed for shelter from the drone of a myriad beating wings. Tram-cars halted, their wheels failing to grip as the rails became coated with dead locusts. Rain saved the day, carrying vast numbers of locusts into the city's sewer.

One of the greatest swarms of locusts ever recorded passed over the Red Sea in 1889. From

reports, mathematicians calculated that this swarm covered 2000 square miles and weighed about 42 billion tons. This must have been a repetition of the swarm described in Exodus: 'And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they... For they covered the face of the whole earth so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left; and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.'

Many mysteries about the life-cycle of the locust remain unsolved. One scientist lived like a locust in a Sudan desert for a year. He kept locusts in cages, feeding them, observing their eating habits, and noting the weather in which breeding flourished. The natives were sure he was mad, but the life histories he compiled embodied many new facts.

Locusts form a more serious menace to farming in South-Africa than any other plague. They are feared more greatly than drought or

hail, stock sickness or depressed markets. This year's locust campaign will not be the last, but it may be the first of a series of early victories over the invading swarms.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

'BOY!'

'Boy!'

The call rings down Africa, loud and clear, at every moment of the day. It echoes through the bungalows and rest-houses, trading shacks and tropical outposts, through bush-camps and along the decks of river steamers. Life in Africa may be wearying at times, or nerve racking or dangerous. But that call of 'boy,' and the instant response, help to make life bearable.

People of a hundred races and many shades of colour, of all ages from eight to eighty, answer that call. 'Boy!' All the white nations in Africa use the word. Back in civilization, where service is not always swift, the man

from Africa grows restless. He cannot shout 'boy!'

You can find servants eager for work almost anywhere in Africa. They meet the steamers and trains flourishing their ambiguous references, squat patiently on the steps of your veranda waiting to be noticed. Read the testimonials proudly handed to you, and before long you will come across something like this: 'Gunpowder is a first-class chef. His salads are often remarkable, for he cannot distinguish between paraffin and olive oil.'

But do not hesitate. The original Gunpowder has probably returned to his village long ago, having sold, his references to the highest bidder. This cheerful impostor may know one oil from another. You will soon find out. The problem in Africa does not lie in engaging servants, but in finding those who have learnt something of the white man's queer ways.

Nearly all the ill-temper caused by black servants is due to misunderstandings. The raw native finds himself in a new world when he enters a white household for the first time. His

mistakes are described, amid loud laughter, wherever white people gather. Efficiency is too much to expect. I have trained many house-boys, step by step, until I thought they had mastered all the elements. Then along came some novelty that caught them flat aback and resulted in disaster.

When I was living in a lonely spot on the South-African coast I showed a new house-boy how to light the wood geyser for my hot bath. I was undressing in the bedroom when there was an explosion in the bathroom. He had built up a roaring furnace, but he had not turned on the water. And it was my fault. You cannot afford to overlook a single significant detail in Africa.

A friend once told his cook to make toast for breakfast. He entered the kitchen to make sure that everything was running smoothly, and found the cook sitting snugly before the fire, pipe in mouth, arms folded, holding the bread to the grate between his toes.

Another new cook was shown round the kitchen and appeared to be intelligent. When his master next visited him the kitchen was filled

with smoke. He had made the fire in the ancient African fashion on top of the stove.

Swahili servants are found far beyond their homeland on the East African coast. I have employed three of them, and found them more skilful than most. They have a queer way of expressing themselves at times. A Swahili, appalled at the amount of cleaning to be done, once told his master's wife: "There is so much silver to polish, you would think Allah himself was coming to dinner!"

In Zanzibar a white household will often employ a Goanese cook, a Comoro islander as head steward, and Swahili assistants. It is astounding that the small Portuguese possession of Goa in India should have exported so many coloured citizens. The Goanese cook displays a harmless affection for Derby hats, frock-coats, and heavy watch chains. He is not at all stupid; but his one notorious fault has wrecked many a dinner party. Everyone is enjoying the aperitifs when sounds of argument are heard from the kitchen; and long before the agitated black butler

appears with the news everyone has grasped the fact that the cook is drunk.

The correct procedure when entertaining in Africa is to lay in a sufficient stock of food, but to give the cook no warning that guests are coming until the last moment. He will not be upset. African servants take a delight in the bustle and excitement of an unexpected party. And there will be no time for the cook to celebrate the occasion.

The whims of a drunken cook must be avoided at all costs. One rascal forgot all about the soup and tinned fish, and served five meat courses in rapid succession - all five dishes being venison cooked in different unappetising ways.

Another cook who had finished his master's sherry found that the turkey was too large for the oven. He lit a fire in the yard, placed the turkey over the flames in a three-legged cooking-pot, and returned to the kitchen to make the pudding. The guests were seated when the cook rushed into the dining room moaning: "Oh sah, dat turkey! Dat fine fat turkey!"

Everyone crowded out to solve the mystery. They were greeted by a pack of snarling,

famished kaffir mongrels. The dogs had managed to overturn the pot, and they had torn the turkey to pieces.

Settlers in Nyasaland recently agreed that the prize blunder was committed by the cook who was instructed in the time-honoured method of serving a sucking-pig. He marched into the dining-room with the sucking-pig bare and ungarnished; but the cook, highly pleased with the little ceremony, had sprigs of parsley in his ears and a large roast potato protruding from his mouth. It was just another misunderstanding in Africa.

You must expect such interludes in a land where a servant is paid 10s a month and 2s for his food. Almost every white household in Nyasaland employs at least six boys. First comes the cook, usually a lazy rogue. There is the laundry boy, who will do no other work. Then the houseboy, who acts as butler, the pantry boy, and finally the kitchen *toto*, lowliest of them all. Others may be ill, but meals are cooked, floors are swept, clothes are washed. If anything happens to the kitchen *toto*

the rest of the staff will appear as a deputation and throw up their hands in despair. Then only do you realize that most of the daily routine has been carried out by one uncomplaining boy.

Misunderstandings occur most frequently, of course, as a result of language difficulties. The African learns English willingly enough, and stores up many a phrase parrot fashion. One houseboy, having overheard a phrase, decided in all innocence to use it himself. "Tea is ready, darling," he informed his startled master in the presence of a number of guests.

A servant pouring out wine was puzzled by the gestures of refusal made by a guest. Surely no one would wish to go without such a drink! At last the boy nudged the guest pleasantly and exclaimed: "Go on, sah - have some!" One of my servants marched out of his room one day wearing a gay blazer with a magnificent badge. When I asked him what the colours represented he declared with pride "Educated man, sah! First form in mission school, sah!"

Many a white man, having given his servant an old suit of clothes, regrets the present when he sees the discarded garments worn with a style and smartness never before revealed. The Zulu houseboy in South-Africa possesses a figure inherited from a long line of warrior ancestors. He is an ebony statue, a delight to the eye of an artist. He fills his clothes with a natural dignity that would stagger a London tailor, and the oldest clothes regain their former glory. Often enough the effect is made ludicrous by some addition or omission - spats with neatly creased shorts have been seen. But the houseboy who sets out to imitate his master may achieve something really enviable.

Smartest in appearance of all African servants at work are the shaven-headed Swahilis with their little white caps and the long flowing gown called the *kanzu*. A Swahili wears sandals in the street, but he must always remove them before entering the house.

Off duty, the Swahili likes to appear in European finery and stride out to meet his friends with an elegant walking stick in his

hand. If his master is away some of the finery may be borrowed. One resident in the tropics returned home unexpectedly to find his cook wearing 'tails' and white tie and his personal boy in a dinner jacket that should have been hanging in the wardrobe. The radio was tuned to London, several gorgeously adorned girl friends were taking refreshments on the veranda, and the behaviour of the whole party was evidently following the high standard set previously by the resident and his friends. A new staff came on duty next day.

African servants are seen at their best 'on safari' far from civilization. At the end of the day's march the line of porters swing their head-loads to the ground in unison. Tents are promptly raised, chairs and tables set out in the shade, tea is served while the hot bath before dinner is being prepared. On such a journey there is no hardship about camping. The 'boys' have brought everything.

'Boy!' Even the languid white children of the tropics have learnt to use that word with the note of command. The youngest members

of the family have their attendants; the smallest tasks are performed for them. Children brought up in Africa are said to become demoralised by the years of constant personal service, but I have seen few signs of it. Tropical Africa often exacts a high price from the white exiles who toil there, and life in the steamy heat would be intolerable without the retinue of servants.

‘Boy!’ A new day is flooding, all too brilliantly, over the remote outpost. Mosquito curtains are drawn aside, and a brown hand presents the tray of life-giving tea without which no man can start work.

‘Boy!’ The green blinds fall and darken the sun scorched veranda. It is the hour of the sun-downer, and Ali stands beside you with the whisky and the siphon. Africa is not so grim after all.

II

"*Jambo, bwana.*" Thus the Swahili servant greets his employer as he draws aside the mosquito curtain and presents the early tea. "Good morning, master."

That phrase, and others, are remembered even by casual travellers in East Africa. Swahili is a language that lingers pleasantly in the memory. It is a rich and expressive Bantu language, spoken over a wider area of Africa than any other native tongue. Authorities declare that it is one of the great languages of the world. Certainly you may travel up and down Africa, and from Zanzibar across to the West Coast, with its unfailing aid. Even in Madagascar and Arabia many understand it.

Swahili creeps into the talk of every English speaking person in East Africa; certain words fit the scene and the situation better than English. Swahili has borrowed from English (and from Portuguese and French, too) and softened the words. A great language indeed, with a literature, a poetry, and a strange appeal for all who have heard it under the palms beside the tropic sea.

I have heard small white children gabbling away to one another in Swahili as they played, just as other little white exiles learn

Hindustani from their ayahs before they can speak English.

The word Swahili is derived from the Arab word *sawahil* (coasts) and it is spoken by the mixed coast dwelling people, half-negro, half-Arab, who have many other racial dashes nowadays. Slave traders from Zanzibar spread the language as far West as the Congo. There are dialects, of course; especially the simplified Swahili in which the white master struggles with the laziness and inefficiency of his house-boys. The original language has an intricate grammar, and though a smattering comes easily, the old, poetical Swahili is difficult to master.

Swahili proverbs suggest a leisurely people. They are right. *Haraka, harahaka, haina baraka* (hurry, hurry has no blessing) is the slogan of the sweltering land. *Bando*, meaning not yet, is the reply to a thousand urgent questions; a word the new-comer learns on the day he steps into East Africa.

Shauri is another overworked word, firmly adopted by white settlers. Dictionaries give it

as 'advice, plan, discussion.' It is now used in the wide sense of an affair, or business. "What happened about that ivory-poaching *shauri*?" a hunter might ask. Then there is the fatalistic phrase that covers-all sorts of affairs and disasters, large and small-*shauri Muungu* (it is God's business). The best way of avoiding an unwelcome task lies in the simple statement: "That is not my *shauri*."

Then there is *malidadi*, the Swahili word for finery, used every day among Europeans as a term of admiration.

The serious study of Swahili has been greatly assisted by the works and dictionaries of missionaries. In these books the vivid phraseology, the wit and beauty of the language may be enjoyed. Some of the Swahili proverbs bear a startling resemblance to English proverbs. One, literally translated, declares: "If the cat's away, the mouse will reign." And another: "Spilt water cannot be gathered up."

In recent years, of course, Swahili has had to cope with the queer things brought by the

white man. Thus a railway train became *gari la moshi*, literally ‘carriage of smoke.’ The word for a bird, *ndege*, now serves for an aeroplane. A white doctor is *daktari*, as opposed to the *mganga*, the witchdoctor. *Amerikani* is a type of cloth first sent to East Africa from the United States.

Not all the adaptations from English into Swahili have retained the dignity of the original words. Swahili demands plenty of vowels. Consider the transformation of blanket into *bilanketi*, glass into *gilassi*, trumpet into *tarumbeta*.

Many borrowed words and phrases become absurd in Swahili. Excellent is translated as *furstklasi*, a present is *krismass*, while red pepper sounds laughable as *pilipili hoho*. *Manozvari* (man-o’-war) is better. A mail steamer is simply *meli*, and an anchor is *nanga*.

Then there are *bafu* (bath), *biskuti* (biscuit), *buku* (book), *fidla* (violin), *keki* (cake). I can safely leave the industrious student to translate for himself such well known Swahili words as *motoboti*, *motokari*, *soksi*, *posta*, *tumbako* and

bakhshishi. *Numbawan* is the word when you want the best. *Chisi* (cheese), *sigari* (cigar), and *supp* (soup) are simple enough.

But *fleipeni* is baffling until the cook displays the frying pan. *Hafisi* is a mystery when written, though it sounds like what it is - office.

Other words from French and Portuguese are difficult, too. There is *mvinyo* (wine), *kasjo* (from *caxa*, a large box), *meza* (table) and *divai* (from *du vin*, meaning claret in the mind of a Swahili servant).

The French are known to the Swahilis as *Kifaransa*, and the Germans as *Kidachi*. Although the Germans held a large East African colony for many years, their language did not appear to lend itself to adaptation. Swahili, however, was declared the official native language of German East Africa.

Hindustani has added greatly to the Swahili vocabulary, for there were Indian dhows trading with East Africa long before the first Portuguese explorer sailed into those seas. You

now hear phrases like *pukka bwana*, which is, of course, the *pukka sahib* of India.

At first sight Swahili appears weak in describing time and distance. That is not really the fault of the language, but is due to the complete indifference of the native himself. The word, *mbali* means far away; and the weary traveller on 'safari' - a beautiful word, that one - has to guess how far away from the tone in which *mbali* is uttered.

Plurals are often formed by the prefix 'wa.' The carrier who still marches through the East African bush with his head load is *mpagazi*; carriers are *wapagazi*.

My Swahili servant never knocked at the door until I trained him to do so. He would stand at the threshold and call *hodi!* The reply is *karibu!* (come near).

Among the hundreds of resounding words to be found in Swahili I am particularly fond of *zungumza* (to converse), *zamani* (long ago) and *chezacheza* (to play about). One word which is detested by all who have experienced the limited resources of East African cookery is

kuku (fowl). The settler on leave in England does not regard any form of chicken, however palatable, as a treat.

Swahili varies from district to district in East Africa, and from island to island. Zanzibar has local dialects as different as the Cockney and Kensington speech. Probably the purest form is heard in Lamu Island, which is comparatively isolated. The Swahilis themselves are now an incredibly mixed race, varying in features and colour from Negro to Arab. Marco Polo gave a description which still fits many of them: "Their mouths are so large, their noses so turned up, their lips so thick, their eyes so big and bloodshot, that they look like devils."

He is a long-winded, plausible rascal, this speaker of Swahili, *Kama maji*, as he would say himself - so loquacious that the words flow like water. But his repartee is clever, and his Swahili riddles witty enough. "A necklace on top, red silver in the box," one will ask. Quickly comes the answer - a pomegranate.

Swahili folklore is vast, with snakes and African animals, grand viziers and sultans taking the places of the hare and the fox. Tales from the *Arabian Nights* are still told every day along the Zanzibar waterfront.

The Swahili lives in a land of *keslao* (tomorrow), and his language fits the country. *Kesho inshallah-to-morrow*, God willing. *Kwa heri*, good-bye.

III

"Pass chop, massa?" inquired the white-clad negro waiter in my West African hotel. "Massa like dem omleg or dem cutleg?"

Such was my first lesson, many years ago, in 'Coast Pidgin' - that crude but effective baby-talk which replaces English from the Gambia to the Congo.

The waiter was merely anxious to know whether I was ready for lunch, and whether I required omelette or cutlet. 'Coast Pidgin' is a weird mixture not only English, but of French, Portuguese and native words, clipped or distorted to suit the negro voice. It has much in

common with the 'Trade English' of the Pacific and is not unlike the China coast 'pidgin.' You must learn the strange vocabulary as soon as possible, or your life in West Africa will become an intolerable comedy of errors on the part of your servants.

'Pidgin' appears to be a Chinese corruption of the English word 'business,' and you will not get your business done without pidgin. The negroes will say sorrowfully: "Dis massa no spik English proper." For that is the position - in West Africa, 'pidgin' is standard English.

Once I lay stranded in a French liner on a sandbank in the Congo estuary. The pilots and tug masters who came to the rescue were Scandinavians. Complete lack of understanding followed, until the French officers tried 'coast pidgin.' There was an immediate response, and within three days the liner was on her way.

One word in 'pidgin' has many uses, 'lib' for example. The origin is obscure, but there is no mistaking the meaning. "Massa lib for shore?" (Do you intend to go on shore, sir?) Or one

native servant will ask another: "Your massa lib for house?" (Is your master at home?)

'Fit' is another overworked word, often misleading. "I fit for die," remarks the pessimistic native when he is suffering from nothing more than toothache.

All cooked food is 'chop.' The famous West African dish consisting of stewed chicken, and vegetables, and various seasonings is called 'palm oil chop.' The olives and sardines and nuts served with drinks are 'small chop.' Or your servant may remark admiringly: "Dis massa chop plenty," meaning that you have a healthy appetite.

Animals of many species, alive or dead, are simply described as 'meat' or 'beef.' A native announces: "I go lookum beef." He may return with pork, pigeon or a haunch of venison. In 'Trade English' of the South Seas the more picturesque word 'bullamacow' is used. "Bullamacow plenty strong too much" means that the goat or poultry intended for lunch has suffered from the climate. Sausages are 'bullamacow bananas.'

The grammar of 'pidgin' in West Africa is strangely similar to the Pacific 'pidgin.' Degrees of size are expressed in exactly the same way - 'small big,' 'big' and 'big too much.' The Chinese version is a shade more subtle, for 'little' becomes 'lik-lik.' All three 'pidgin' languages reveal the same difficulty in pronouncing the word 'box,' for which 'bockiss' is substituted. (A planter who told his servant to fetch the 'dice-bockiss' was annoyed when the refrigerator was carried on to the veranda). The term 'book' for any written message is also found in several 'pidgins.'

'Dash,' I believe, is purely West African. A 'dash' is a present or tip, and you will not get very far in comfort unless you fall into line with the system. When you reach a village on the march you 'dash' the headman some tobacco or a pocket-knife. He returns the courtesy with a 'dash' of chickens, vegetables or fruit. But it should be noted that a 'dash' is not regarded as an exchange. The polite fiction of presents is maintained.

So far, 'pidgin' appears to be more concise than English, and so it is when one's demands are simple. Once the native tries to describe something more civilized than food and drink, however, his efforts become both clumsy and humorous.

Thus an ordinary carpenter's saw is translated: "One big knife too much for cut plank he come he go he come he go.'

A piano is similarly laborious: 'One big bockiss too much massa fight him from outside he cry from inside.' The Pacific islanders formed almost exactly the same impression when the missionaries first played the piano there: 'Big fellow bockiss you fight him in teeth he cry.' An accordion is naturally 'small fellow bockiss you shove him he cry you pull him he cry.'

Bible stories, prayers, and even the Ten Commandments have been translated into 'pidgin' by missionaries - one of the most intricate language feats ever attempted. Judge for yourself the success of the effort from these examples:

Keep Sunday.

Hear for your father and your mother.

No kill.

No make bad.

No thief.

No lie.

No want other man his woman.

An interpreter explaining to a number of Australian aborigines how to give evidence in court went about it as follows: "Now listen. Want you talka true feller and tella big feller boss on top. Talk loud altogether men in court want to hear you. Talk true all-a-time, not what other black boy bin tellum you. Talk what you savvy clear alonga your own eye, not what you been hear alonga your own ear." The person described as 'big feller boss on top' was, of course, the magistrate.

A supreme test in 'pidgin' proficiency was passed triumphantly by an interpreter in Papua whose duty it was to announce the accession of King George VI. The talk began:

"King George he dead. Number one son Edward, he no want him clothes. Number two son he like. Bishop he make plenty talk along new king. He say: 'You look out good along all the people?' King he talk: 'Yes,' Then Bishop and plenty government official and store-keeper and soldier and bank manager and policeman, all he stand up and sing and blow him trumpet. Finish."

All this 'pidgin' jargon grew out of the first contacts of sailors and traders with primitive peoples. It is not remarkable that the niceties of speech should be lacking. A Pacific island girl was once offered a Hollywood film contract, but she feared the voyage and the sea-sickness. As she put it: "Belly belong me walk about too much."

The 'pidgin' of the Chinese contains many English words simplified for Oriental palates, and certain phrases not found in other jargons. 'Polligee' baffled an English family until they saw the porridge. 'Bobbely' meaning trouble, 'maskee' (never mind), 'ping-ping' (half-and-half), 'chow-chow' (eat), and 'dolla' (generic

term for money) are all peculiar to Chinese waterfronts.

India has Hindustani, East Africa has the Esperanto of Swahili to bridge the gap between black and white, and between natives of different races. Swahili spread with the slave-traders, so that now even the pygmies of the Congo forests understand it. A Latin 'pidgin,' known as Creole, is still spoken in the Cape Verde Islands and Portuguese West Africa. While words of Portuguese and native African origin predominate, there are many French and Spanish words in Creole.

Creole also contains such words from English as 'ovacote' (overcoat), 'overtaime' (overtime), 'trosas' (trousers), 'alrai' (all right), 'gotchor' (go ashore), and a resounding exclamation from earlier day - 'tarote!' derived from 'my troth'!

In such a lingua franca as this does Yellowbelly jumbo chat with Moneysweet when they meet on the coast and find that they have no other language in common. It is not very elegant, but it is better than babel.

" Orright! Palaver finish!"

IV

One day in Ovamboland I asked the native repairing my car where he had learnt to speak English so well.

"In London, sah!" he replied, looking up from the broken front spring with an expression of happy memory on his ebony face. " Great days, sah-wonderful times."

This well-travelled native had been taken to England as a servant by a doctor. He spent three years there, working at one period in the Battersea power station. And he returned to Ovamboland with a passionate love of motorcars. "In London," he told me wistfully, " the motor-cars are so many, they are like flies."

The mind of the African forms strange impressions abroad; it is impossible to say what will appeal to him most. Many of the wonders of civilization leave him unmoved. As a rule, it is only when he discovers something he can compare with the things he has known in Africa that he shows surprise.

Klaas Velletjes, a Bushman from the Kenhardt district, was taken to London with his family in the 'eighties of last century. The visit is said to have been arranged at the wish of Queen Victoria, and the queer little wizened travellers were inspected by the Royal Family. Klaas Velletjes returned to work in South-Africa as a shepherd wearing a bowler hat and morning coat bearing the labels: 'Made expressly for H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.'

When Klaas was asked what he thought of London he could only speak with awe about the Smithfield meat market. Meat had always been the greatest luxury in his life and the spectacle of so many huge sides of beef had staggered him.

The desert-dwelling Bushmen, accustomed to hoard water in ostrich-egg shells, are always astounded at the sight of water running from taps and other plumbing arrangements. But they seldom glance twice at an aeroplane.

West African natives taken to Europe by a missionary were terrified when they saw their own breath in winter. They disliked lifts, for the sensations were outside their experience.

"Many people over there work entirely alone - there is no need for a headman to stand beside them," these natives told their unbelieving friends when they returned to West Africa." Also, there are animals that work for them."

They were trying to describe the horses they had seen - a difficult task in a land where horses were unknown.

One powerful chief, visiting England for the first time, was taken to a naval review. The officer escorting the party of natives pointed out a submarine." See, there is a ship like a fish - now it dives, soon it will come to the top of the water again."

The old chief watched with obvious boredom, remarking through his interpreter: "Of course it will come up again. Do you think I imagined the men inside would wish to live at the bottom of the sea?"

Yeta III, Paramount Chief of Barotseland, attended the Coronation in 1937. He was shown over a large mail liner in Table Bay Docks, and then boarded the smaller ship in

which he was to travel. " This is evidently the offspring of that other monster," declared Yeta.

Several native councillors accompanied Yeta to London. Yeta was presented to King George VI and a long conversation followed. When it was over the councillors gathered eagerly round Yeta and pestered him with questions."

What did you talk about?" they asked.

Yeta stared at them coldly. "We kings know what to talk about," he replied with dignity.

The native love of dazzling uniforms is well known. Lewanika, of Barotseland (Yeta's predecessor), was present at the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, and was delighted with the gift of a gold-braided nautical uniform with cocked hat, plumes, white gauntlet gloves, and dress sword.

Yeta received a similar outfit, and he also brought home as a souvenir a red-and-gold lion decoration used in the Mall on Coronation Day.

Khama deeply admired the troops during an official visit to the 'Great White Queen.'

While in London he purchased a huge supply of assorted military uniforms from a second-hand dealer. Soon his black battalions were marching in Bechuanaland wearing kilts, Coldstream Guards' tunics, French cavalry uniforms, red breeches - a gorgeous array stamping along with bare feet.

When the unhappy Emperor of Abyssinia paid an official visit to London some years ago as Prince Regent his impassive air was shaken for the first time in the Tower of London. The arms and armour, swords and pikes in the White Tower made the whole Abyssinian retinue cry out with excitement.

A less famous potentate from East Africa arrived in London during the winter and shivered miserably until he was shown the monkey house at the zoo. Here he brightened. "Bring my blankets - I shall remain in this place," he told his interpreter.

Natives seldom react to the life of England in predictable ways. There was once a white official from tropical Africa who took a native servant on leave with him. The master

expected to gain in prestige as a result of the visit, but the native thought little of it. On his return the native told his friends: "My master may be a great person here, but over the water he is nobody."

A chief who was extremely unpopular among the white settlers in a certain African territory once lost his way in the Piccadilly tube. To this day the settlers lament the fact that he eventually found his way out.

Then there was the black servant in England who was told by his master to keep a seat in a railway compartment. The servant sat at the window, showing his teeth when passengers approached and calling out menacingly: " This hut is for my master! "

CHAPTER TWELVE

DIAMONDS AND GOLD

I

For twelve years, ever since the great discovery, the 300 miles stretch of South-

Africa's 'diamond coast' has been guarded like an open-air bank vault. I have just re-visited this wild and lonely Namaqualand coast where every tide sweeps diamonds on shore. The blue-clad sentries are posted from the Orange River mouth to within 150 miles of Cape Town.

Yet in spite of barbed wire, searchlights, and machineguns the illicit diamond traffic flourished during the boom in diamonds, and there is always a danger that an increase in values may lead to a revival of raiding and diamond smuggling.

"It was the depression that killed the 'I.D.B.' traffic - not the police," they tell you in Namaqualand. What are the diamond defences like today? They are, in my opinion, sufficiently strong to prevent disaster (which once almost occurred) to the organized and essential control of the diamond market. All the richest deposits are so well protected that the gangs which formerly dashed to the coast by night and returned with sacks of rich gravel would stand no chance at the present time.



POLICE CAMP ON THE NAMAQUALAND 'DIAMOND COAST.'

There are patches of ground on that coast where, in ten minutes, a man might collect diamonds worth £6 000. Such places are fenced in and never left alone.

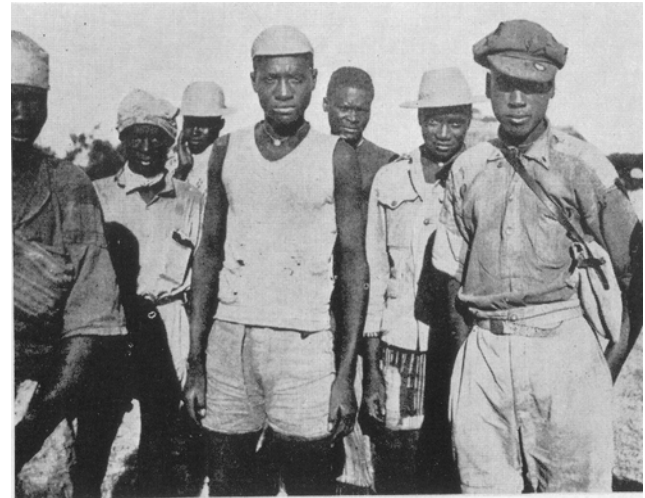
Other places (such as Toren, to the north of the Olifant's river mouth, which I visited recently) are not so easily looted. The diamonds lie under a couple of feet of sand and gravel. It would take a day or two to reach them. So

there are no barriers in these places. Each spot is in charge of two or more young constables, who carry out daily patrols north and south of their stations, always at low tide. At high water the cold South Atlantic surf protects the diamonds, and the police may rest.

You may call on these lonely policemen if you wish, and stand on beaches where unsuspected wealth lay hidden for centuries. But there are strange crimes in Namaqualand, and many things are forbidden. "You must not carry a spade or even pick up a pebble," a constable explained to me. "When the farmers come and camp out with their families on these beaches at New Year we have to warn them that their children cannot play as other seaside children do, with spades and buckets."

The police are always on the alert for pot-holes and signs of digging. They play the cat-and-mouse game. When they find a newly dug hole in the ground they wait under cover at night. Sooner or later the diamond poachers return. Then the law pounces on them. No need to prove they are in possession of diamonds.

Their spades and sheepskin shoes (used to deaden the sound of footsteps) mark them as law-breakers.



OVAMBO NATIVE LABOURERS WORK IN THE COPPER
AND DIAMOND MINES OF SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

The men in the diamond outposts welcome a raid. Weeks pass, as a rule, without excitement; and the capture of a band of raiders may lead to promotion.

"For a week or two the life here is like a seaside holiday," one young constable told me." Then the heat, followed by wind or cold sea fog, begins to worry you. At the end of a year you wonder whether you will ever be a normal person again. A spell of leave does not do much good; all the time you are away there is the unpleasant thought of returning to this desolation. Married men are never sent to the Namaqualand coast. If a man marries he is transferred at once. I have known men marry just for that." My friends the constables at one outpost have a pet baboon. They have collected hundreds of pebbles of different colours and laid them out in the shape of a huge South-African Police badge in front of their reed hut. Such is the hobby which is the pathetic substitute for gardening on a coast where nothing can be cultivated.

Fresh water has to be brought to these camps in iron drums for 20 miles or more. The men draw their free rations (mostly in tins) and pay a coloured servant to do their cooking. They have a first-aid kit and a snake-bite outfit. Life goes

on, though for days and often weeks they see no strangers. Thus the visitor (especially one with a bundle of newspapers) is hospitably welcomed and entertained to tea with condensed milk. It tastes good on the Namaqualand coast.

They ought to be supplied with radio receivers, for these constables - earning £20 a month, and guarding diamonds worth thousands - cannot afford battery sets. They are all trying to save money, possibly with the idea of marriage and escape from Namaqualand. Occasionally you find a man with a motor-cycle. Most of them are cut off completely from the farms and villages of the hinterland. They patrol the beaches, scrambling over rocks, trudging through the sand at burning noonday or bitter midnight, cursing the great diamond discovery and the duty that has made them exiles.

A weird coast indeed. Here and there are rocky islets, swarming with seals or covered with sea-birds. Diamonds have been found on several of the islands to the north of the Orange River, and prospecting might reveal further hoards. But the Union Government does not want new

diamond discoveries. Bird guano and seal skins are preferred to diamonds.

II

Diamonds of silver hue are rare, and the specimen of 153 carats found by a digger at Gong-Gong, Barkly West, recently was a superb example. It was sold for £3200.

‘Mongrels’ they call these coloured stones on the river diggings; but they are not despised. The simple digger believes, with some scientific support, that coloured diamonds are ‘cross-bred’ - a sort of hybrid between the pure ‘white’ diamond and other precious stones. Hence the expressive term ‘ruby-mongrel’ for a red diamond.

Strangely enough, the digger does not altogether relish finding coloured diamonds. It gives him an uncomfortable feeling that he may have thrown away many other rich fragments, thinking they were merely coloured quartz. When a ‘blue mongrel’ is found the digger’s pleasure is marred by a superstitious dread that nothing more will be recovered from that patch of gravel.

I have seen wonderful parcels of coloured diamonds on the sorting tables at Kimberley. All the colours of the rainbow are there indeed. A red tinge, due to an impurity in the crystal, increases the value many times, an example of a fault being worth more than perfection. One 6-carat river stone in this class fetched £900. But most famous of all red stones is the Ram’s Head of rose-blush tint, valued at £20,000, won from the Golconda mines in India, and once a part of the Russian Crown jewels.

Red is the rarest colour, with blue next and green third - especially the green diamonds that cut green. Often enough the green is merely an outer covering. A diamond of true emerald-green is a real prize. Such stones are speculative. I know a dealer who bought one of this type for £1 550 and sold it a few days later for £3000. He was an expert who could visualize the appearance of the stone after cutting. The largest green diamond ever recovered weighs 48 ½ carats. It is now in the Dresden Museum.

Amber diamonds are really in the same class as red. Known to the diggers as ‘old brandies,’

they are given more romantic names in Hatton Garden - the 'Golden Dawn,' for example, which fetched £4950. When an amber diamond turns up in the wash you may be sure that the mass of garnets, carbon, and other rubbish will be combed more carefully than usual. Amber diamonds are supposed to go in pairs. I saw the largest known example of this shade in the De Beers collection at Kimberley.

Black flaws may render a diamond useless except for industrial purposes. Yellow bubbles, too, lower the value. Shades of colour make a tremendous difference in market prices.

The world's finest collection of coloured diamonds was gathered by a Kimberley dealer over a period of fifteen years and sold to an American connoisseur not long ago. Among the thirty-five stones, uniform in size, were perfect examples of tangerine, pink, light green, dark green, blue, white, amber, steel (silver), black, and copper-tinted diamonds.

A wealthy specialist might build up a large collection of different shades of one colour. In the yellows it is possible to find lemon, canary,

orange, old gold and many other hues - all illuminated by the matchless and mysterious blaze of the diamond itself.

III

South-Africa has been following the treasure trail again - a search for bars of gold worth £200,000 by the widow of the old adventurer, Von Veltheim.

Baron Von Veltheim, as he called himself, was one of the desperate characters who missed riches in the early days of the Rand and took a leading part in many dramas of that stormy period. He was tried for the murder of the millionaire, Woolf Joel, acquitted and deported. Three times he returned to South-Africa for a mysterious purpose which he would not disclose. On two occasions he was imprisoned and again deported. He died in 1934.

In 1939 his widow arrived from Germany and secured permission from the Union Government to search for gold buried by the 'Baron' nearly forty years ago. Before his

death, Von Veltheim told his wife the story of the treasure. It was in 1900, during the South-African War, when the British troops were approaching Johannesburg, that a high Transvaal Republic official asked Von Veltheim to hide the gold which lay in the mint. Von Veltheim declared that he buried it in munition boxes on a farm near Johannesburg. He described the position - near three boulders shaped like tombstones.

Unfortunately his description was not detailed enough, and after much digging Madame Von Veltheim was forced to give up the search. It was suggested that the boxes had sunk into a marsh, and capital could not be found for further attempts.

There can be few other countries where clues to 'Kruger Millions' or 'Grosvenor treasure chests' are so easy to secure; and where so many people have taken part in quests for hidden wealth. I have enjoyed a front seat at several South-African treasure hunts myself.

Many tales of hidden treasure - like the Von Veltheim hoard - have their origin in the feverish

period of the South-African War, when bullion, apparently, was not treated with the care it deserved. Indeed, there must be a number of comparatively small 'caches' of gold sovereigns hidden on farms; for at that time the distrust of banks was greater than it is to-day. It is often easier to bury money than to find the spot again. Farmers killed in the war took their secrets with them - but the search goes on, rumoured fortunes grow larger with the years.

Not all the lost gold, however, is lost for ever. A native entered a Transvaal bank with 80 sovereigns a few years ago and asked for the gold to be changed into silver. This aroused the interest of the police. The native led them to a field where he had unearthed a rusty tin containing £400 in Kruger sovereigns and silver coins of the Queen Victoria periods.

A queer discovery was made by a ploughman on a Constantia farm, near Cape Town, in 1915. He turned up ingots bearing the stamp of the Simmer and Jack Mine; and it looked as though gold worth about £8000 had been unearthed.

Expert inspection, unfortunately, revealed that the bars were brass, coated with thin layers of electroplated gold. It seemed probable that the ingots had been cast for some criminal purpose, but the mystery was never solved.

Every native tribe in Southern Africa has its treasure legend, and some cannot be dismissed as myths. Rhodesian pioneers firmly believe in Lobengula's hoard of gold and ivory; many an expedition has sought it. For many years before his flight Lobengula had been drawing a monthly allowance of £100 in gold under the Rudd concession. He must have inherited gold from his father. Undoubtedly he possessed a store of ivory. Less certain was the stock of uncut diamonds said to have been taken regularly by him from his tribesmen when they returned from work in the Kimberley mines.

The remains of the royal kraal at Bulawayo were combed thoroughly for treasure after Lobengula's departure, but not unnaturally, everything of value had gone. Some years later several of Lobengula's wives arrived in Bulawayo on a shopping visit, and they paid

for the purchases with sovereigns bearing early 19th century dates. The main hoard must have been buried beyond the Zambesi, and no clue to its position has ever been found.

Swaziland is full of stories of 'treasure tombs,' owing to the former custom of burying chiefs with their possessions in secret caves. Zululand has a legend of 'Crown Jewels' of the Royal House buried half a century ago. It is said that after the battle of Isandhlwana the Zulu impis searched the dead British soldiers, collected all the money they found and handed it to Cetewayo.

Sunken treasure in South-African waters forms another aspect of the undying quest for easy wealth. I once watched, uninvited, an attempt by a diver near Hermanus (on the Cape coast) to recover an 'iron-bound money chest' believed to have come from the famous troopship, *Birkenhead*. Fishermen had often seen the chest among the rocks at low tide; but all attempts to reach it had failed.

After years of discussion a syndicate was formed; and amid great secrecy a diver and his assistants and gear were taken to the spot.

I shall never forget the eagerness on the faces of the syndicate when the diver came staggering out of the surf to make his report.

"That's about the most dangerous job I have tackled," exclaimed the diver as his head-dress was removed. He had been battered by the waves in a narrow gully, his forehead and hands were bleeding.

"Yes, but what about the treasure?" inquired the syndicate:

"There's nothing down there," declared the diver firmly. "Nothing but a square, flat rock that looks like a box."

A few years later I was not at all surprised to see that another company intended to search for the 'Birkenhead bullion,' estimated at £250,000: Treasure legends never die. The company was unsuccessful, but you may be sure that no one has lost faith in the gold beneath the waves.

I was on board the Italian salvage ship *Arpione*, during her attempt to locate sunken

treasure by digging up the floor of Table Bay with a four-ton grab. Many tantalizing relics came to the surface - rusty cannons, ancient bottles, blackened oak timbers. But no money. The melancholy enterprise cost the company £50 a day.

My favourite sunken treasure is one about which there is no doubt at all. In the year 1702 the Dutch East India Company's ship *Meresteyn* was lost by a blundering captain on Jutten Island, in the entrance to Saldanha Bay. I have seen many silver ducatoons washed ashore from this wreck. No attempt to reach the *Meresteyn* has been made by modern divers, though the ship's position is well known. The money chests still lie there in the easy depth of 14 fathoms.

There was an amusing sequel to an attempt to raise treasure from another Saldanha wreck a few years ago. The expert Italian diver found bars of metal encased in rotting wood, and he sent up a ton of it. Samples were rushed to Cape Town for the analyst's judgment. It was iron ballast. One of the Saldanha fishing boats to-day carries as ballast this iron from an East

Indiaman sunk in battle more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

IV

Will the world ever know the whole truth about the undying legend of the 'Kruger millions'? For more than thirty years this famous South-African treasure story has lured scores of expeditions; it has been revived every year in new dramatic forms; it has even played a part in sensational murders and several frauds.

The latest sidelight on the affair that once seemed so mysterious has just been supplied by Mr. Carl Hens, a German, who was a ship Chandler in Lourenço Marques from 1896 to 1904. He declares that he carried boxes of gold - the funds of the Transvaal Republic - one night in 1900 to a German steamer at anchor off Lourenço Marques.

Fortunately there are several men still living who were present during the removal of the Transvaal Republic's gold from Pretoria just before the British troops entered the capital.

Statements made by these men enable parts of the story to be pieced together, even though it will never be possible to account for every sovereign of the celebrated treasure.

Documentary evidence, too, will be available when the 'sealed collection' of Boer War papers gathered by Dr. W.J. Leyds is published. Dr. Leyds, former State Secretary to President Kruger, presented these documents to the South-African nation in 1930, on condition that until 1940 only certain selected people were to have access to them. The papers, including fresh facts of the Kruger millions, are now being indexed.

The main facts about the treasure have been narrated by Mr. Gustav Preller, who served as a lieutenant with the Transvaal Artillery during the Boer War. At the time of the evacuation of Pretoria he was working under Mr. B.J. Kleynhans, Minister of Mines. One night, in May 1900, Mr. Preller received urgent orders to commandeer a conveyance and proceed to the side entrance of the old State Mint.

In the presence of Mr. Preller, gold bars, rolled sheets of gold, bags of smooth sovereigns which had not passed through the punching machine, clippings and shavings of gold, were loaded into cabs and taken to the railway station. There was no time to weigh this treasure, for the British under Lord Roberts were approaching Pretoria.

Mr. Preller explains, however, that he had become so accustomed to handling raw gold that he was able to estimate the value of this consignment with fair accuracy. " I think we removed no more than half a million pounds worth of gold that night - all there was," he declares. " But besides this, there was a small quantity on the station that had arrived at the last moment from Johannesburg. Taken altogether, the so-called 'Kruger millions' did not amount to more than £750,000."

The train, with Mr. Preller and other well-known officials on board, now steamed off hurriedly down the line towards Lourenço Marques. President Kruger made this train the last headquarters of the Transvaal Republic, issuing proclamations and directing the commandos from

his coach. For several weeks the train stood at Nelspruit Siding, near the Portuguese border, and there the council of war was held which decided that President Kruger should go to Europe to carry on propaganda for the Boer Republics.

During this period a great deal of money had to be paid out to firms and individuals who were supplying the Boer forces with the munitions of war. Thus it is possible to account for a large part of the legendary 'buried treasure.'

Mr. Preller also states that a firm in Lourenço Marques forwarded a quantity of the gold to Germany to be minted for the Transvaal Republic. This money found its way back to the fighting Boers through German South-West Africa. (No doubt this was the gold which Mr. Carl Hens, mentioned earlier, helped to send away from Lourenço Marques.) The travels of this consignment form a remarkable narrative, for the minted sovereigns were carried safely from Windhoek, across the Kalahari, to General Botha in the Transvaal by the late Mr. J.L. van der Merwe, a former Johannesburg mining commissioner.

So it does not appear that there was much gold left for burial. Dr. Leyds, who lived in exile with President Kruger, declared emphatically a few years ago: "I can positively declare that no Government gold was buried either before or after the departure of President Kruger for Europe. The President would have spoken to me about it, and moreover, all the circumstances were against it. I do not deny that the Government was in possession of gold and banknotes. This money, however, was not buried, but spent on behalf of the South-African Republic and the Orange Free State."

How then did the persistent legend originate? Colonel Deneys Reitz, the famous author of *Commando* has suggested that railway trucks covered with tarpaulins and protected by armed guards, were responsible for it. At Nelspruit these trucks were often secretly unloaded at night and their cargoes sent off into the bush by wagon.

Several old burghers, who escorted those mysterious wagons into the bushveld, have stated that they bore cases of gold and that they

were buried. Colonel Reitz and other responsible Republican officials have since declared that the cases contained ammunition - a far more convincing explanation.

Nevertheless, there are thousands of people in South-Africa who believe that this fortune in gold still lies buried in the wild Transvaal territory near the frontier of Portuguese East Africa. It is possible that during those uncertain days small quantities of gold, paid out to individuals, were buried and - as so often happens - were not forgotten, but lost. So there may be a true gleam of gold in the romantic story of the 'Kruger millions,' though the manner in which the State gold was transported and spent is no longer a complete mystery.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AFRICAN MONEY

One night when the memories of journeys up and down and around Africa were crowding into my brain I opened a box of money and jingled it like a miser.

Have you ever handled 'Kissi pennies,' Maria Theresa dollars, 'Kobbo' coppers, pice and piastres, centavos and cents, 'double shokas,' Congo francs, escudos and angolares? All these I have seen in far corners, and some had remained with me - paper, silver, copper, nickel, and other mysterious metals. They are worth more as relics of experience than the small amount in shillings a Cape Town bank might exchange for them. A collector would laugh at these coins, and I am doubtful about the attitude of a bank cashier.

In Africa it is still possible to find sea-shells and cattle, salt, corn, soap, and tobacco used as money. You do not have to be an explorer to discover natives who are puzzled at the sight

of a florin; and at the same time you should not be surprised when you meet primitive people whose mental arithmetic in a business deal is superior to your own.

Money in Africa has been the origin of millions of stories worth telling. How few have been remembered and recorded! Here is one phase - the first reaction of the African mind to the white man's money.

It happened in Kenya years ago, when East African cents (one hundred to the rupee) appeared in the bush. They were of white metal, perforated, and they disappeared from circulation as rapidly as the queerly shaped three penny bi in England recently. Before long the puzzled authorities found that the 1 cent coins were being made up into necklaces and bangles, the hole in the centre making stringing easy.

Not to be outdone by the natives, white builders in the territory discovered that 1-cent coins made excellent washers for corrugated iron roofs. Moreover, they were cheaper than zinc

washers. The shortage of small change in East Africa remained acute for some time.

As a contrast, there was the surplus of small change in Angola. Today the main coin is the angolar, which can be spent only within the colony. At one time the Portuguese escudo was used; ten little metal coins went to the escudo, and there were 120 escudos to the pound sterling. A British merchant obtained judgment (not without difficulty) against a Portuguese customer for £1 200. There came a day when this sum had to be paid. The Portuguese, annoyed and ingenious, found that he would be within the law if he settled the claim in the smallest coin of the realm. Three ox-wagons drew up at the British merchant's door, and coins weighing 7 tons were deposited there!

Africa's most massive and, I think, most romantic coin is the Maria Theresa dollar. It is a magnificent silver coin, bearing the date 1780, the head of the Empress Maria Theresa, and the Imperial arms of Austria. This strange survival is due to a conservative spirit among the peoples of Abyssinia, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and other

Red Sea countries. They regard other faces on coins with deep suspicion. For well over a century this handsome 'trade dollar' captured the imaginations and the confidence of people who still preferred barter. The effigy of the dead Maria Theresa was known and honoured far beyond the coasts of Africa; and it is still willingly accepted in the lands I have named. The Royal Mint in London has struck hundreds of thousands of them during the past few years, each the size of a five-shilling piece and containing 83 per cent of silver.

After the conquest of Abyssinia Mussolini reluctantly secured the original matrices and stamps from the Vienna Mint and began coining the dollars. An attempt made by the Italians to introduce paper lire into Abyssinia had failed. More recently small Italian coins of a new rustproof steel called 'acmonital' have been struck; but the Abyssinians remain faithful to the old lady of Vienna. The Maria Theresa dollar fluctuates in value with the price of silver. It is not strictly legal tender anywhere. Yet the superb coin holds its own

against rupee and shilling, against all upstart money, yielding only to the magic of gold.

In the West African interior and elsewhere quantity is preferred to quality. Traders, hunters, all travellers on safari must carry tin trunks filled with small copper coins. And it is wise to make sure that every penny bears the head of the ruling monarch. There is a persistent belief in certain dark territories that when Queen Victoria died all money bearing her likeness lost its value - and so on. Such people are like the taxi-drivers of civilization; they never have any change. In a country where half a dozen bananas may be purchased for a penny it is absurd to carry shillings.

The London-minted penny of West Africa is known as a 'kobbo,' but it is not made of copper. The metal is nickel, the inscriptions English and Arabic, and in the centre is the convenient hole for stringing. Silver coins are not perforated, but they bear a palm tree decoration which makes the African feel that the money really has something to do with the country.

Paper money means as much to the semi-educated West African coast native as it does in the West End of London. Further inland it is accepted with the deepest suspicion. During the war, however, paper money circulated more widely than before, natives earned more, and many a wad of unwanted notes was hidden in palm-leaf roofs. A cunning native, owner of a crazy travelling cinema outfit, then went from village to village giving shows. He charged one paper pound a head for admission, but he delighted everyone by giving each patron a silver shilling change. This benefactor must have cleared thousands on the tour.

There is another colony in British West Africa where, for a long time, the white officials shuddered at the mention of paper money. Old notes had been called in, and strict instructions were given that they were to be destroyed by fire. Unfortunately, the supervision was too casual. Soon afterwards, a great deal of old paper money was redeemed by the banks, and then, too late, it was discovered that the notes bore a number series which had been certified as burnt. The

natives who took part in that swindle were hardly of the cowrie and bead-dealing classes!

Nevertheless, the boldest travellers in Africa will arrive at last among tribes where all coins are regarded with suspicion. On the northern frontier of Liberia, for example, the people for centuries have used bars of iron as currency. These are also a familiar sight in the bush of Sierra Leone, where they are called 'Kissi Pennies.' One bar is roughly equivalent to an English penny. The shape is based on arrow-head design, an ancient survival indeed.

In Northern Rhodesia and the Congo I have seen ingots of copper shaped in the form of a St. Andrew's Cross, so that they may be carried on sticks, each with a recognized exchange value of twenty Congolese francs. The Belgians call them 'les croisettes de cuivre.' Natives in the west of the Katanga Province still make them. An obstinate old chief owned a small copper area next to one of the greatest modern mining plants. His workmen could be seen moulding copper crosses in the shadow of a huge blast furnace.

Along the Lualaba River in the Congo the fishermen base their ideas of value on a piece of fishing-net of a standard size. Three squares of net are equal to an iron spearhead, known as a *shoka*.

A larger piece of iron is a double *shoka*, while the limit of value is reached with the *ngbele*, nearly 6 feet in length. For 10 *ngbeles* you can buy a canoe and paddle off down the shining Congo. A wife costs only five.

These fishermen were also great collectors of bottles when I steamed down the Lualaba in the old *Prince Leopold* twelve years ago. They came out in their canoes begging for empty bottles. Small boys fought in the wake of the stern-wheeler, disregarding crocodiles, every time a beer bottle was flung to them. I was told by traders that a 'bottle standard' had been set up in many river-side villages. A fowl, a fish, or a coconut was reckoned as worth so many bottles. Thus bottles are entitled to a place among Africa's queer currencies, with the dimpled whisky bottle among the high values.

Then there are the cowrie shells, strung on fibre and carried all the way across Africa

from the Indian Ocean beaches. Scores of varieties of this shell are found; but the 'money cowrie,' white or straw coloured, blue inside, and only half an inch in length, became an object of veneration in Equatorial Africa more than a thousand years ago. The cowrie, however, has never been valuable except in large quantities. You can buy thousands of cowries for a few shillings.

These beautiful shells are no longer widely used; but there is no doubt that they are widely hoarded. Before the white man arrived in the Cameroons ready money took the shape of bead necklaces and cowries. No one could say how the glass beads reached the country - they were certainly not made there. Then the Germans seized the Cameroons and marks were placed in circulation. The recognized rate of exchange was one mark for one thousand cowries. Many natives hoarded both marks and cowries, so that to-day the older people find both forms of 'savings' almost valueless. Even the francs that have come to them since the French occupation have lost much of their

value. Natives in the Cameroons cannot be blamed if they prefer wives and cattle to the white man's money!

In Ovamboland recently I saw many of the treasured omba shells, gathered at secret places on the coasts of Angola and South-West Africa, and worn by native wives with all the pride shown by a white woman with diamonds. One omba shell is worth an ox. Among the Hereros, too, these round shells were formerly signs of distinction. A rich man always displayed one on his forehead, like a bookmaker with a pearl tie-pin; and the *omba* shell was the badge of a priest of the sacred fire. The Hereros have now become accustomed to pounds, shillings, and pence. But in more primitive Ovamboland the noble *omba* shells retain their value as an easy means of exchange. In this respect they present a contrast with the practically worthless cowrie.

Nyasaland inspired confidence within its borders by using gold sovereigns throughout the Great War - the only British possession to do so. Everyone gave up notes on entering the

country; but the much desired gold was exchanged again for paper when the traveller departed. Uneducated natives there have always remained firmly on the quaint 'chicken standard.' They value their services in terms of chickens, and when they buy a pound of tea they think of the cost, not as a shilling but as two chickens. A bag of meal runs into high figures - forty chickens.

It was in Nyasaland that an early trader (supposed to have emigrated from Aberdeen) passed off florins on the simple natives, telling them the coins were half-crowns. The story may be libellous, but a florin is still known in Nyasaland as a 'Scotchman.'

Southern Rhodesia has known many money troubles. During the South-African War it was almost impossible to obtain any change smaller than a 10s. note. Silver coins had either left the country or they had been hoarded. The Government dealt with the emergency by having little cards printed with stamps of various values attached. They became extremely dilapidated, but served the purpose.

The lowest value of these cards was three pence, and for thirty years afterwards the smallest coin in Rhodesia was three pence. Since then bronze Rhodesian pennies have been minted.

I remember the time when a less-dignified form of currency enjoyed a limited circulation in Lourenço Marques, Portuguese East Africa. This was the casino 'chip,' used on the roulette tables at night, and accepted freely by day at the cafes on the Band Square in payment for drinks. The sixpenny 'chips' were bone, stamped with the value, but there were beautiful mother-of-pearl counters for determined gamblers.

African money! An odd collection it makes, strange memories it brings. There is a wrinkled old Indian woman making a fortune as a money-changer in a back-alley at Zanzibar. She knows all the world's currencies, and even displays Russian roubles in her window. I shall have to take my box of coins to her next time I pass that way. One glance, a quick movement of bony fingers, and the money will be swept

away and transformed into silver. Until then I shall keep the small change of my African journeys.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ISLES OF BIRDS

For years I had sailed past Seal Island without ever setting foot on the rocky, guano-whitened slopes. 'It is surrounded by sunken rocks on which the sea usually breaks,' warns the Africa Pilot; but I had often steered my small sloop close enough to watch the sun-bathing colony of seals littering the northern point.

At last I was invited to explore this little-known islet, a place few people, apart from naval seamen, fishermen and the guano gangs, have ever seen save as a white streak etched against the blue surface of False Bay. Though the island lies within sight of the naval base at Simonstown, it is inaccessible except in the finest weather, and therefore remote. The

contract for gathering the guano harvest is held by Miss Sophia Fernandez of Kalk Bay.

Seal Island is one of many little bird isles owned by the Union Government. Nearly all the others are worked by the Guano Islands Department; but it is more convenient to allow this lone rock to be cleared by private contract. Old Pedro Fernandez held the contract for many years. When he died six years ago, his daughter, Sophia, already experienced in the queer trade, took over the management. It is a masculine enterprise, yet she handles every detail with real knowledge.

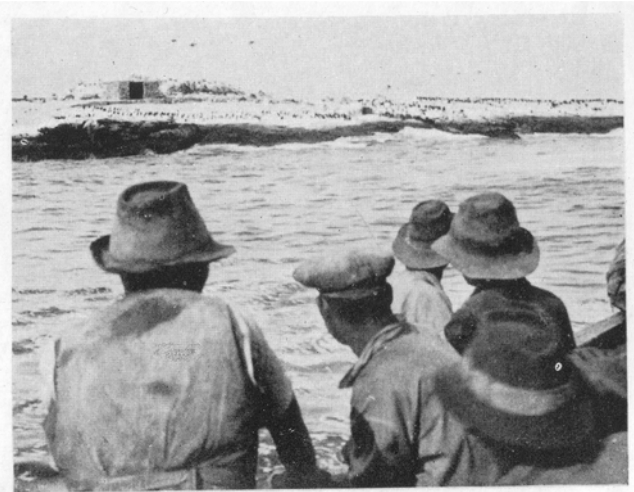
Her brothers, of course, carry out the difficult routine of landing the expedition on Seal Island every Summer, supervising the work on shore, keeping the men supplied with food and water, and loading the sacks of guano. But Miss Fernandez visits the island, purchases the stores, controls the whole business side of the affair. She was there on the day of my visit, fishing with the men of the motor cutter *Simon*, checking equipment, satisfying herself that nothing had been forgotten. "Just think

what would happen if the men on the island found I had not packed the matches!" she pointed out.

There are now four Fernandez brothers, and I met two of them on the day when I accompanied the family expedition to the island. Thomas, the eldest, is skipper of the *Simon*, a splendid seaman and an expert in handling boats along the dangerous shores of Seal Island. A younger brother, Cyril, takes charge of the party of seven men on the island, becoming a willing exile for a month every year. The others, Sydney and Gabriel, are skippers of Fernandez family boats on the coast. Three more brothers were lost on one disastrous day in 1922, when the fishing boat *Columbia* capsized in heavy weather in False Bay. A boat named in memory of them, the *Three Brothers*, was wrecked on Seal Island some years afterwards.

Several of the Fernandez boats carry a row of black painted ports like old-time men-o'-war. The *Simon* is the fastest cutter on False Bay, and she can load 15 tons of guano. When

she is not plying between Kalk Bay and Seal Island she steers as far North as Luderitzbucht for the craw-fishing or loiters off Cape Point after snoek.



APPROACHING SEAL ISLAND

The sea is the Fernandez family tradition. About a century ago a number of sailor men, including the first Fernandez, deserted from a Spanish ship and settled at the Cape. Their descendants still form the backbone of the

Kalk Bay fishing fleet. Though the Spanish language is no longer spoken among them they are still Roman Catholics, and the Spanish type of countenance may be clearly traced.

You must visualize Seal Island to understand the hardships and difficulties of the Fernandez enterprise. It lies about 7 miles from Kalk Bay harbour just a rock, as I have said, without one patch of sandy beach. The area is about 1 acre and the highest point about 50 feet above the surf. It is waterless, completely barren. Only the seals, the duikers, penguins and pelicans are really at home there; though the labourers who sign on for the work year after year are happy to find themselves on the desolate rock again, with regular meals for a month assured. As I stood on Seal Island in the evening I thought of the strong contrast between this primitive adventure and the lighted pleasure resorts of the False Bay coast only a few miles away.

It was all summed up, accurately enough, on my official permit: 'The Government accepts no

responsibility whatever for any accident which may happen to, or any loss which may be incurred by, the holder of this permit either in landing or on embarkation from the island.'

The Simon lay rolling at anchor off the landing place an hour after leaving harbour. Skipper Thomas Fernandez had brought her close in, for the day was, as calm as could be expected. Men and stores were transferred to an open boat in tow, and cautiously we approached the sea-swept rock which gives doubtful access to the safety of the island.

"It is just a matter of watching the sea and counting the waves," young Cyril Fernandez told me. "One man will jump on shore with a line and make it fast to a ring-bolt in the rock. We have a stern-line fast to the cutter. Wait for slack water, then take your chance. Now!"

I jumped, and clambered on to Seal Island with wet feet. And I imagined the conditions on a day of heavy weather. Such a day as that on which Cyril Fernandez found himself sinking in a smashed boat, and was flung on to the island by a great wave with hardly a scratch. Or another

day when another boat was lost and he swam for his life surrounded by seals. "They played with me like kittens with a ball of wool," he recalled. "I thought I was finished, but not one seal bit me."



THE SEALS OF SEAL ISLAND RUSHING INTO THE WATER AS THE AUTHOR APPROACHES WITH HIS CAMERA

I watched the precious fresh water floated ashore in barrels, hauled up and rolled to the hut, emptied into iron drums. Then came the stores, passed from hand to hand. No picnic party this, but the grim essentials of life on a rock coal

for the 'galley,' wood and candles, flour, rice, fish oil, sacks of onions and potatoes, salt and salt fish, tinned meat, tea, coffee and paraffin stoves, a drum of oil, fish hooks and lines, simple medicines, the tobacco rations. One or two packages may be dropped in the sea, but never the tobacco. No alcohol is allowed on the island.

'Here is another important item - insect powder,' Miss Fernandez showed me. 'The birds have been occupying the stone hut where the men will live and they are not good tenants. To-night the men will have to sleep under canvas. Then they will clear out the hut, white-wash it, and use the insect powder. Otherwise Seal Island is a most healthy place.'

Hard work, I think, keeps the exiles healthy. They started soon after landing, a line of men on their knees with scrapers, brooms, and shovels, literally scratching the valuable guano from this acre of rock. Miss Fernandez receives payment from the Government for each ton of guano delivered. The men are paid

by results; they work cheerfully by daylight and with lamps in the dark to clear the rock so that each man may return with about £7 saved.



TWO OF THE FERNANDEZ BROTHERS WITH THEIR STORES
ON SEAL ISLAND

One grey-headed labourer, John McLaghlan, has not missed a season for twenty years. Seal Island, comfortless though it may seem, gives them greater security than they can find on the mainland. I saw a labourer with one arm in

the gang. "The best worker of the lot," Cyril Fernandez told me.

Wind and rain are the enemies of the men on Seal Island. A high wind blows the loose, powdery guano away. Rain damages the guano in sacks if left uncovered, and washes the untouched deposits into the sea.

The occupation of the island must be carefully timed with an eye on the weather. But the habits of the birds are the most important factor. Most of the guano is left by the migrating 'trek duikers' - those unlovely black hordes of cormorants you see flying like squadrons of bombers, in marvellous formation, low over the sea. Shy birds on shore, they nest on the outer rocks and lay their long, chalky eggs. They hasten screeching from the invader. Two or three months after the capricious duikers have arrived, the clearing season on Seal Island begins.

The lordly penguins are there at all times, seizing the best positions, scorning the exposed places where the duikers breed. Nevertheless, the penguins of Seal Island are poorly housed in

comparison with the inhabitants of other penguin resorts. A penguin likes to hollow out a burrow with tireless feet and live underground. On the hard granite of Seal Island this is impossible, so the penguins cower and cringe behind rocks, in crevices, beneath boulders. If you walk among them they hide their heads ludicrously, or huddle their chicks together and hiss defiance. Spend an afternoon with the penguins and you realize why a great Antarctic explorer called them 'the comedians of the South.'

Dozens of pelicans use Seal Island as their breeding ground. They were away fishing in the vleis of the Cape Flats when I called. Cyril Fernandez has studied this interesting group closely. "They destroy the young duikers and penguins and eat the eggs," he said. "These pelicans seem to prefer fresh water fish. They bring all sorts of queer food over here from the mainland: If you find a dead snake, a rat, or a chicken you may be sure it has been dropped by a pelican."

The sacred ibis, too, prowls among the young birds, and fully deserves its criminal reputation.

This sinister bird flies all the way from Egypt to plunge its long beak into tasty fledglings.



LANDING THE PRECIOUS WATER-BARRELS ON SEAL ISLAND

False Bay is the greatest line-fishing area in South-African waters. One school of thought believes the bird sanctuary on Seal Island should be destroyed to improve the fishing. It is a difficult problem, and one which applies to the whole coastline. Which are worth more to the country - the guano producing birds or the fish?

Naturalists have calculated that the birds destroy twenty thousand tons of fish a day. The yield of guano from all the islands in a good year is about ten thousand tons. Those interested in the fishing industry would drive the birds away from the roosts they have occupied for centuries and turn the fish into fish-meal - a food for cattle and poultry. The controversy fills the correspondence columns of the newspapers from time to time; but no solution has been found. The Government, however, believes literally that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and there is little likelihood of a change. Guano is rich in nitrogen and phosphates - the most satisfactory fertilizer of all for wheat crops.

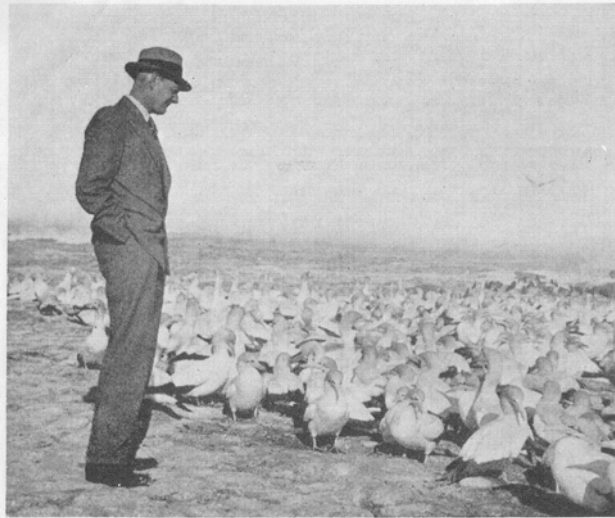
Finally, there are the seals. I walked to within 20 yards of them before an old warrior raised the alarm and the whole herd lumbered away slowly, with whiskers turned angrily in my direction, until they slipped into the sea. Once afloat, they formed an inquisitive semi-circle, faced the rock where I stood gazing down on them, and stared back boldly. These seals, too, have often been blamed for the fact that hauls of fish in False Bay are not

what they were 'in the good old days.' Seven years ago a party of seasick riflemen were authorized to thin out the herd. They made poor shooting from their motor-boats, and the seals remained on the island. Since then the seals have seldom been disturbed. The demand for sealskins has been poor. But there will be slaughter on a large scale if the market improves - South-African skins fetch as much as 48s. apiece in London when fashion favours the seal. The waters round Seal Island will be streaked with red, and I shall stay away.

Seals have poor eyesight, but if the hunters approach them down-wind they pick up the scent a mile away. "Once you frighten a herd, they grow cunning," an old hand told me. "You'll be lucky to get within clubbing distance of them. You have to wait days for a chance - a calm sea and the wind right. Then you may kill a thousand in a morning. I've seen it."

Years ago the docile, silky seals waited innocently to be butchered. Now they have grown restless. They post sentinels to warn them of the coming of the raiders. A female seal, cornered

with its young, will turn and fight. And if a man shows cowardice, the female will follow him with dangerous jaws snapping viciously.



THE AUTHOR WATCHING THE GANNETS ON A
SOUTH AFRICAN GUANO ISLAND

The raiders make a determined rush as the seals lie sunning themselves on the flat rocks. Rifles cannot be used - the bullets would damage the valuable skins. So the hunters club

right and left mercilessly, with never a pause until their victims are dead and the survivors have found safety in the sea.

Great care is taken in removing the pelts, for a slip of the knife means a ruined skin. The whaleboat is loaded with pelts; and as the boat, dripping blood, rows back to the ship, sharks follow eagerly in the hope of snatching the skins. Once on board, the skins are salted and stowed away in barrels. A man may earn £400 at sealing in the short season of four months, but he lives dangerously.

Sealing is a Government monopoly in South-African waters. But owing to fogs and the remoteness of the islands, there are wonderful chances for poachers. Outside the three-mile limit, of course, seals may be taken by anyone, so that the poachers always have a ready explanation of their valuable freight.

Some poachers use large mesh nets, others dynamite. The raiders fix a charge of dynamite on a buoy and allow it to drift down on a herd of seals. A desperate trade indeed, and one

which has not changed much since Kipling wrote his 'Rhyme of the Three Sealers.'

I found traces of the Royal Navy on the northern end of the island. There is a stout white flagstaff, a seamanlike job, from which a distress signal may be flown by the marooned men. Seamen visit Seal Island once a year to paint the flagstaff: Among the rocks were fragments of old shells, relics of the days when Seal Island was a target for the ships of the African Squadron. Birds and seals must have short memories. Great care is taken nowadays to avoid frightening the revenue-producing birds from the islands. But it seems that precautions are hardly necessary when the naval bombardment fails to disperse a bird population. (Up the coast at . Lambert Bay recently I observed another example of the tenacity with which the birds cling to an island home. The malagas hordes on Penguin Islet remained undisturbed while all the machinery of a modern harbour-construction plant was at work in their midst. They made way for the cranes and

cement blocks, but they did not abandon the island.)

While I wandered and climbed about the weird, teeming rock, the men had brought the stores up the steep slope to the hut. Beside this one-roomed building, on a flat rock face, bygone gangs of labourers had painted their names and the dates of their occupation. I suppose they felt the need of some little monument after their toil and loneliness.

Cyril Fernandez seemed a trifle wistful as the time for parting drew near. "We shall be comfortable enough this time," he said. "A few years ago there were no huts - only tents. Even in summer the nights on the island are cold. We sleep on the empty guano sacks, and keep a fire going. Wood and water are always left on the island for castaways. During a gale the sea sweeps up almost to the doorway of the hut. New hands are terrified - they think the island will be swamped."

I asked about the fresh water supply.

"We never run short," he declared. "Casks can always be floated ashore, even when it is

impossible to land on the island. There is a flag signal by day for emergencies, and a fire on the highest point of the rock would be noticed at night. Of course, we are careful. Fish and potatoes are cooked in sea water, and taste better that way. Four casks of fresh water, each holding 50 gallons, last a week. We can catch all the fish we want. Sometimes we eat penguin and duiker eggs. The cutter comes once a week with fresh bread and water. As for amusements, we hardly need any. Sleep is the best hobby after a long day's work collecting part of the season's crop of from 30 to 80 tons of guano. A guitar and a pack of cards fill in the gaps. There is no excitement. Years ago, in my father's time, a labourer went mad, walked into the sea and was drowned. More recently a couple of men became bored and left the island unknown to the rest of the gang. They floated off on empty water barrels and were washed up safely on a beach miles away."

It was a remarkable escapade in view of the distance, the method chosen, and the man-eating sharks that cruise round Seal Island.

Seal Island must have been explored in Dutch East India Company's days, but the early records do not mention it. I have seen a Customs notice of 1845 offering guano and shells for sale on Seal Island. No doubt the shells would have been used for lime burning, as they are to-day. About a century ago there was a landing stage on the island to make the shipment of guano easier. It is obvious that the trade now carried on by the Fernandez family was flourishing long ago. At one time walls were built round part of the island to prevent the guano from washing into the sea. The walls, like the landing stage, have vanished.

But the Seal Island labour goes on in spite of the anger of the sea. Year after year the men make their home on the rock, within sight of the brilliant lights along the waterfront, the Robinson Crusoes of False Bay.

II

South-African farmers have enriched their soil for more than a century with guano from the desert isles of the coast. Guano has been crudely defined as 'fish that has passed through the

systems of sea birds'; but the guano industry makes one of the most fascinating pages in the story of Africa. Even to-day there is adventure on the islands.

The discovery of the first guano island (Ichaboe, pronounced 'Itshaboo,' like a sneeze) off the South-West African coast, and the removal in one year of guano worth £2,500,000, were events which form a strange contrast. Captain Benjamin Morrell of the American sealing schooner *Antarctic* was the discoverer. In 1828 he landed on Ichaboe in search of seals. He wrote a book about his voyages, and suggested that Ichaboe might be used as a base for trade with the Hottentots. Birds' eggs, leopard skins, ivory, ostrich feathers - all these things he mentioned. Then casually, as an afterthought, he wrote: 'The surface of this island is covered with birds' manure to a depth of 25 feet.'

Morrell, with his keen business instinct, missed the fact that he had been standing on a fortune worth £9 a ton. In Liverpool, however, there were people who realized the importance of Morrell's find. At that time the islands off

Peru supplied the world with guano. Schooners were sent out to locate Ichaboe. They sailed secretly, but on their return to Liverpool with rich cargoes the sailors talked and a boom more feverish than any gold or diamond rush began. Ichaboe, the waterless island less than a mile in circumference, became a new 'El Dorado.' it was, however, a 'no man's land' as well; and rival crews fought bitterly with knives, belaying-pins, and fists for the white wealth that lay heaped under the sun.

The scene may be imagined when it is recalled that 451 ships lay at anchor off Ichaboe on one day in 1845, and that six thousand men were toiling on 'claims' at the same time. One enterprising skipper sailed from Cape Town with a gang armed with revolvers and cutlasses, determined 'to die on Ichaboe or get all the stuff off.' After much bloodshed two frigates of Her Majesty's navy; *Thunderbolt* and *Thunderer*, restored order. Some years later the islands were annexed by the Cape Government. It was not until 1898, however, that the guano islands became a State industry, as they are to-day.

While drunken crews were rioting on Ichaboe, schooners were combing the barren coast for other guano isles. They found Hollam's Bird Islet, an inaccessible pile of stone and lava, crowded with penguins and gannets. Further south they landed on Mercury Island, which has a great cavern in its face and trembles like quicksilver when the seas beat against the walls. This huge jelly still shakes, and still yields guano and penguin eggs year after year.

Then Possession Island was discovered, covered with half a million dead seals, looking as though a sudden disaster had wiped them out at the same moment. This mystery has never been explained. It has been suggested, however, that a hot whirlwind, bringing sand from the desert coast, might have suffocated the multitude. Seal hair, skeletons, and teeth are still dug out of the soil of Possession. More remarkable still, perhaps, was the discovery of diamonds on the island. They were dug up by a Government expedition at a time when the Germans were opening rich fields on the mainland. When diamonds worth Ciooo had

been recovered the Cape Government decided to abandon the enterprise for fear of disturbing the birds. They felt the guano would, in the long run, be worth more than the diamonds.

Those who yearn for a lonely island paradise will not find one among the guano isles. Yet men have come to love these desolate, treeless rocks in the ocean. I have often sat listening to the tales of Signor Emilio Barbieri, better known as 'Mister Milo,' who spent thirty years as headman of Ichaboe. He was an unhappy man when he retired from the service a few years ago. I met him first on the island, then in Cape Town.

Born in Italy sixty-three years ago, 'Mister Milo' arrived in Table Bay in a sailing ship in the 'nineties of last century. He joined the famous Cape schooner *Seabird* under Captain Towns, made a number of voyages to the guano islands, and then left the sea to work on the islands.

"I think I lived on that island too long," said 'Mister Milo' reflectively when last I saw him. "Always I have been too hard at work to notice

the loneliness. Now I do not know how to occupy myself - it is a problem."

But his dark eyes shone as he spoke of the life he had liked so well, 500 miles north of Cape Town on the isle among the birds.

"When I first went to Ichaboe," he said, "most of the labourers were white men of all nationalities, including well-educated Englishmen. One of my companions on Ichaboe was a former barrister whose hobby was painting - the Public Works Department supplying the paint and canvas for his seascapes. A fine crowd of men they were, once they got away from the liquor.

"I lived for many years on Ichaboe in a deck-house that came ashore from a wrecked sailing ship. The island was littered with wrecks and covered with the graves of sailors who had been drowned or killed in fights for the guano. A cannon, still lying on Ichaboe, shows how desperate these fights were, until a British man-o'-war sailed up to claim the islands.

"It was a hard life, perhaps, but it suited me. All fresh water had to be brought from Cape Town. We caught fish, sometimes we had penguin eggs, and I kept fowls, pigs, goats, canaries, and a squirrel. During the season when the guano was shipped I have seen as many as one hundred and fifteen men at work on Ichaboe. At other times I have been there alone. My longest stretch on the island was forty-seven months, though I usually came to Cape Town on leave every year.

"In the winter, when the market for sealskins was good, we went sailing. A dangerous game - men were washed off the slippery seal ledges and drowned, while others were attacked and injured by the great bull seals. Yet I never had an accident, or even a day's illness.

"One island had no proper landing-place; only a chain hanging from a cliff for the boatmen to grip. We had to station a man there to keep the German seal poachers away."

"If a man was seriously hurt there was usually a broken-down doctor in the gang to

give him expert attention. We had all sorts, good and bad, though I found they were all pretty good after a course of hard work.

"Nowadays the labourers are Cape coloured men, and they are good workers too. When parcels arrived I made them open them in front of me and took away the dagga the Indian hemp drug. Then they were all right. Drink and dagga were the only problems on the islands. A cask of rum among a gang of labourers and anything may happen. I had to be firm.

"I went to Italy for a holiday in 1927 and found everything changed. They called me 'the man from Africa.' My friends were all dead or gone to America. I was glad to return to Ichaboe."

As 'Mister Milo' talked of this tiny island, covered with many millions of white gannets, he recalled other exciting incidents. Once a German steamer loaded with ammunition for the war against the Hottentots ran aground there. The Germans salvaged the cargo, fearing that it might fall into the hands of the enemy.

Some of the men working on Ichaboe had a grim sense of humour. As they passed the graveyard on their way to work every day one man would lift the lid of an exposed coffin. The bodies were perfectly preserved by the strange soil of Ichaboe, and this man would hold a daily conversation with a red-haired corpse. "Good morning, Jack - still here?" he would remark. "Well, you got a darn sight better shirt than mine. I think I'll take it off you."

Tough customers, but as 'Mister Milo' says, "all good men on the islands." 'Mister Milo' himself is a man of unusual strength, with dark hair and moustache only touched with grey.

Guano is a rich crop, even in the worst depression, while the demand is enormous in prosperous times. In a normal year, South-African wheat farmers receive 10 000 tons of the fertiliser, packed with nitrogen and phosphates, at a price well below the market value. A guano island is worth ore in the course of time than a small gold mine. South-

Africa is fortunate in having this white wealth along its shores.

III

Now men are building strange new 'islands' along the desert shores of South-West Africa, knowing full well that millions of sea-birds will settle on these sanctuaries and enrich the owners.

The story behind these modern and highly successful ventures is the demand by the farmers which I have just mentioned, a demand which, in South-Africa, far exceeds the supply. Private owners of artificial guano islands are enjoying prosperous seasons. Come with me to the sand dunes near Walvis Bay, on the edge of the Namib Desert, and visit the scene of one man's success.

Mr. A. Winter, a German carpenter, pioneer of the new industry, is the owner of this 'island.' It was in 1932 that he saw a reef, uncovered by low tide, and teeming with birds. Whenever the rocks were exposed the birds seemed glad to find a refuge there. Then the

sea came up and drove them off their perch. They had to fly far down the coast to find another spot where it suited them to alight.

So Winter rowed-out to the reef, saw that there was a solid foundation for a platform, and decided to build. Men who had lived along the coast for years laughed at 'Winter's folly' and predicted a costly failure. Winter started work. He drilled into the rocks, fixed heavy steel rods in position, bolted strong wooden beams between, and then built his platforms above. The man-made 'island,' out of reach of the waves, resisted all the forces of the sea.

Immediately the platform appeared, the birds arrived and nested there. In that rainless climate their droppings remained the valuable fertiliser that sells at sight in the wheat-growing districts of South-Africa. Winter saw that his dream had come true, and went on enlarging his 'island' confidently. The first crops of guano provided capital for further expansion. Today Winter's 'island' resembles a mid-ocean aerodrome, with room enough for an air liner to land on the top deck: for he has

added a second storey since the enterprise began; and it looks as though the birds will be living in an open-air skyscraper one day.

One month's work a year by a gang of labourers removes the guano crop. At other times the birds are left undisturbed, for the more tenants Winter has the higher his profits rise.

The guano was formerly shovelled into sacks and loaded by chute on to a raft. Three tons could be hauled to the mainland at one loading. After a spell of heavy weather, that washed the raft down the coast, Winter constructed a cableway system to his 'island.' He salvaged his raft, but he prefers modern methods. What is more, he can afford to install up-to-date plant. Guano is worth about £9 a ton; the price is likely to rise, and Winter's clear profit during a recent season was £800.

Others have followed Winter's example at other favourable spots on the coast of South-West Africa. One enterprise, at a lonely point named Cape Cross, has a romantic background. It was at Cape Cross that the first Portuguese explorers landed and raised a stone cross. There, too, a

penniless beachcomber discovered a huge deposit of old guano and made a fortune.²

This old guano had been left on islets in a bay from which, as a result of sand action, the sea had receded. There was so much of it that years passed before the last deposits were removed.

But when the sea receded the birds were exposed to attack by jackals and other vermin of the desert. They no longer nested in the dry bay, though they still fished in the waters off-shore.

Cape Cross has been selected as the site of a 'pile-and platform island' similar to the Winter scheme. Here, however, it will only be necessary to build a platform high enough to place the nests out of reach of prowling jackals. There is no limit to the area of the platform. Construction has started, and huge dividends are anticipated.

Most ambitious of all these schemes to exploit the birds was the £5000 enterprise at Sandwich Harbour, 30 miles south of Walvis Bay. Two islands in the shallow harbour yielded rich crops

² The story of this discovery is told in *Secret Africa*, by Lawrence G. Green (Stanley Paul).

of guano for many years. One of the islands lay only a few feet above the sea, however, spring tides flooded it again and again, and hundreds of tons of guano were washed away.

The concession owners decided to save this waste by raising the level of the island. Special pumps arrived from Holland, capable of delivering 50 tons of sand an hour. The island now stands well above the highest tide, so that the profits of the company are secured while the birds are highly satisfied with the new arrangement.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PENILESS WANDERERS

*'I ain't got folks an' I ain't got
money, I ain't got nothing at all,
But a sort of queer old thirst that
keeps me movin' on till I fall.'*

He has a faraway look in his eyes, his clothes are light and strong and he wears incredibly massive boots.

Always he is ready, like a conjurer, to produce a fat and fascinating book containing hundreds of signatures and rubber-stamps, a book revealing place-names such as Wadi Halfa and Abercorn. Even without the 50 lb. pack on his back, you have no difficulty in recognizing him. He is the man who has walked through Africa.

Year after year these determined travellers arrive in Cape Town. They are not always young, and nowadays many of them will admit that they prefer riding to walking. Some have bicycles, a few of a special class arrive by sea; nearly all of them are seeing Africa and the world for nothing.

The game began nearly forty years ago, when Major Ewart S. Grogan, D.S.O., made the first overland journey between Cairo and the Cape. Major Grogan did not travel free by any means, but he proved that the trip could be done.

He marched with carriers, swam rivers and waded through swamps, rode on horses and mules and wagons, took canoes and native

dhows when he came to the lakes. Bearded, tattered and exhausted he struggled out of the Nile swamps with his boots tied up with string.

Among the first passengers to cover the Cairo-Cape Route in an air liner was Major Grogan. "I feel like Columbus returning to America in the *Aquitania*," he declared. "There is all the wide world and all the years between that experience and my flight." His first journey lasted more than two years; the air trip, eight days.

Many strange travellers have followed the trail blazed by Major Grogan, or made fresh trails of their own.

The familiar tourist routes from Cairo to Cape Town mean nothing to these penniless wanderers. They have no elaborate schedules, no baggage worth mentioning, certainly no books of travellers' cheques. But there is a healthy, confident look about them. They have been bold enough to tackle difficult tasks without fearing hunger or friendless poverty in distant lands. Not one man in a thousand, perhaps, will give up security to embark on such an enterprise. Yet I

have met a number of courageous spirits who have done it.

One was a young Canadian who had covered 8000 miles in Africa in five months at negligible cost. He did not pretend to have walked. "It is impossible to walk from Cairo to Cape Town," he declared. "Anyone who tried would die in the desert."

He told me some of the secrets of travelling on next-to-nothing.

"Never admit you can't do a job," he said. "I accept every piece of work offered. If I fail - well, I get fired and move on. But more often I find the job is not so hard after all."

This man made the long journey by river steamer down the Nile. The first-class fare is, £28. He took a 'deck' ticket £1 16s. In native territories he found that ample food could be purchased for 1 ½ d. a day.

On his back he carried a satchel weighing 50 lb., with his eiderdown sleeping-bag, change of clothing and medical kit. "Every white man is regarded as a doctor by the natives in some parts of Africa," he said. "I was entertained royally by

many a village headman after I had dispensed a few simple remedies."

Missionaries were hospitable, too. He worked for his keep at a number of stations, and then moved on as a passenger in the mission motor-lorry. Indian traders helped to transport him from place to place. "Give me the lonely roads where only one car passes every day - then you are sure of a lift," he said. "On the busy routes, every car ignores the hitch-hiker."

A packet of salt is the best form of currency in the Congo villages. He would give the eager headman a little salt and receive chickens and fruit in exchange. When I met him he had travelled 23,000 miles since leaving Canada. Having seen all Europe, Asia Minor and Africa, he was bound for India. There was no doubt in his mind that he would complete his journey round the world.

I know an ingenious American, neither penniless nor rich, who saw Africa free as a result of a stroke of luck. He was on board a Congo river steamer at a time when navigation was liable to be delayed by the papyrus grass.

Huge islands of this grass blocked the narrow waterway and made progress impossible. The passengers were informed that the ship could not proceed for a fortnight.

Someone suggested elephant hunting as a means of passing the time. My friend joined the hunting party, brought down two elephants, and sold the tusks to a Greek trader for a sum that paid all his expenses through the continent. "Though I don't mind admitting that it took fifteen shots to drop the first elephant," he told me.

A honeymoon couple motored through Africa not long ago at a total cost of 30s. a week. They carried nothing more deadly than an old kitchen knife. The tiny car became a double bed at night, and nothing ever attacked them. The young husband lectured at dozens of schools throughout the journey to cover expenses.

A party of German minstrels spent more than two years on the road in Africa, lecturing, playing and singing for their meals and petrol. Their motor-truck covered 50,000 miles and

took them from Cape Town as far north as the Sudan, zigzagging across Africa four times.

Firearms mean trouble at every frontier, so the tropical tramps seldom carry even an automatic pistol. Many of them emphasize the fact that they have had no dangerous encounters with wild animals. But there have been tragedies. Mr. A. E. Darling, a traveller on foot, was mauled by a leopard in Portuguese East Africa a few years ago, and one of his companions was killed. The first motor expedition to leave Cape Town bound for Cairo before the war was headed by a motor-cyclist. This pioneer was killed by a lion. James Scott, the roving Scotsman who finished his walk from London to Cape Town in 1937, told me that he had been 'treed' by lions twice, but never touched. He suffered great pain from a scorpion bite, however, and he was worried by rats while he slept.

Scott was a genuine walker, striding along with the fifty-pound pack that all the experienced men carry, often living on dates and water. At other times he found that tea,

sugar, and beef suet were the best foods. His was a remarkable achievement for a man of fifty. He wore out twenty-two pairs of boots during the journey of 15,000 miles. In Nairobi he met Major Grogan and compared notes. I asked him whether he ever felt lonely during the long march.

"Lonely? Only in civilisation," Scott replied. "There's too much to see in the desert and the jungle to be lonely." The cyclists, of course, are able to cover the ground at a much greater pace, and carry more gear. There are huge stretches of Africa almost impassable for motor-cars; but the narrow bush pathways, used by natives on foot for centuries, form easy thoroughfares for the cyclist. Douglas Carr, a Canadian, rode down Africa in seven months, sometimes pedalling 70 miles a day.

The fat books I have mentioned as part of every penniless traveller's kit are carried to show that the owner is indeed a member of a race apart and no ordinary hobo. These books, signed and stamped by mayors, postmasters and police, prove that the traveller is following a

definite route. If he is walking round the world to win an enormous wager, here is the evidence. The book, I imagine, leads to many a welcome offer of hospitality - a meal and a bed for a tale of adventure - fair exchange indeed.

A Scottish traveller, of course, will seek brother Scots wherever he goes; the Germans will be hailed by fellow countrymen; Greek wanderer will find Greek trader, even in the Congo forests. (A one-legged Greek limped right through Africa on a crutch not long ago.) Failing private accommodation, there is usually a spare bed in the police station for a decent traveller on foot. But in tropical Africa every white man passing through an outpost is treated as a guest. There is seldom any danger of going hungry and without shelter. The prospect of a new face at the table is welcomed.

Many of these travellers carry postcard-portraits of themselves, which they sell. They all tell you they are collecting material for books, but few seem to arrange for publication. It must be heart-breaking for these amateur writers to discover that there is no market for the stories of

the hardships that were so real to them. Or perhaps they never write their books, after all. Perhaps they are still wandering in distant countries, heading for the horizon on journeys that never end. I have still to meet one such traveller who is ready to declare that the long tramp has ended. He is always moving on to a new land.

The motorists who crash through the African bush, seeing the continent from end to end in faster and faster times, sometimes pay their way by advertising the cars and accessories they use. Airmen, too, may still secure financial backing for their dashes down Africa. A private flight, when the expenses are shared by one or two passengers, can cost much less than the first-class ocean liner fare.

Some men make religious pilgrimages through Africa. "I come with a message from your best and oldest friend," says this traveller as the door opens. He then sells an illustrated edition of the Bible and passes on. I remember one expedition which travelled in a caravan painted to resemble an armoured car. The members called

themselves an 'international peace mission.' They charged a small fee for inspection of the caravan, sold pamphlets, and saw a fair stretch of Africa at the expense of the inhabitants.

One lucky man in Cape Town was engaged by a wealthy American who wanted to drive to Nairobi. On arrival there, the American presented the car to, the driver and paid his expenses back to Cape Town. Such chances of seeing Africa for nothing seldom occur.

Penniless sea-rovers sail the shores of Africa from time to time in small craft. I met a young German who had sailed into Table Bay with his wife and a friend on board a little yacht. Off the West African coast the tall Bermudan mast had gone over the side. The wife had been operated on for appendicitis. By the time they had reached the coast of Angola their capital was exhausted. They settled the food problem by anchoring in lonely bays, going on shore with rifles and shooting for the pot.

Such is the spirit that conquers all the spaces of Africa. It is impossible not to admire

the determination of this restless legion of modern Camerons and Stanleys. They add nothing to maps or science. But they have no regrets for the way they have chosen, and it is easy to imagine them saying to themselves, like Tatchell's happy traveller:

'And here by the side of a sea
that's shinin' under a sky like flame,
Me that was born with a taste for
travel gives thanks because o' the same.'

II

Air lines strike across the map of Africa, and motor-roads zigzag through desert, bush, and jungle. But there are still many far outposts and remote corners that can be reached only by the old and primitive ways of transport. Oldest of all is the safari. In the 'Copper Belt' of Northern Rhodesia I once met a Nigerian native trader who had walked there from the walled city of Kano, a distance of more than 2000 Miles, with his merchandise. He had come by those narrow trails which form a network over Africa-

footpaths leading from village to village, stamped out by bare feet many centuries ago and followed ever since. You can cross the continent from Loanda to Dar-es-Salaam keeping always to these tracks, sure that you are taking the easiest possible route. But there is no room for a motor-car on these side-streets of Africa.

The main streets of today, where railways stretch up to the highlands from the sea, are the slave and ivory caravan roads of yesterday. Such a one is the Arab highway leading north-west from Mombasa to the Congo and beyond. The present Lobito Bay railway tracks are laid over the bones of thousands of slaves. And farther north, still bearing an old-fashioned cavalcade, is the Lake Chad trail that begins on the West Coast and ends on the shores of the Red Sea.

On the narrow paths bicycles are seen, with here and there a swaying camel. But in the land of the tsetse fly, where pack animals cannot live, the foot safari remains the greatest cavalcade of all, and the native porter with his head load is still the most reliable carrier.

Such journeys may be made in greater luxury than the newcomer to Africa might imagine. You can have drinks off the ice, hot baths, a seven-course dinner, and a comfortable bed under a mosquito net. The equipment is split up into regulation 50 lb. head loads, and it is merely a matter of taking a sufficient number of porters. Years ago the load was 75 lb., and the porter cheerfully carried the additional weight of a rifle and ammunition, presents for his wife, food and water-bottle, brass wire and beads for use as money. The *kilangozi* (head porter) set an example by choosing the largest tusk, and the whole safari swung down the trail to the songs he started:

*‘Tsokoli-i-i-tsokoli
Yo-o-o-o.’*

‘Are we downhearted? No!’ That is about the best translation. The Swahili porter has helped to make history in Africa, and no great enterprise in the tropics has been completed without his aid. He carried the first steamers (in sections) to the Great

Lakes, and guided all the explorers to the unknown hinterland.

On the pay-sheets porters appear under such names as *Kiboko* (hippo), *Risasi* (cartridge), or *Piga mzinga* (fire the cannon), simply as a matter of convenience. They are the strong men of Africa. It is by no means rare to see the head porter dance along for a mile at the end of the day to encourage his tired companions. Shoulder loads are moved in unison at the end of a song, a juggling feat; all along the line heads jerk aside, the load shifts over with a thump.

For four centuries the *machila* has been the white man's mode of travel along the bush paths. Of course there are many white travellers and hunters who would scorn to use this queer contraption; they prefer to stride ahead of the safari with the gun-bearer close at hand. But when there are women in the party, or when a man falls ill, the *machila* will be there. In its simplest form the *machila* is a canvas hammock slung on a bamboo pole and carried in turns by a team of ten or a dozen men. The most muscular fellows are chosen. They move out of step (or the motion

would be intolerable) at a leisurely jog-trot. At the best of times it is a nerve-racking method of transport, often causing a sensation like seasickness.

Many attempts have been made to improve the *machila*, and I believe there is now a type with one wheel, which reduces the discomfort. I have seen ornate *machilas* with leopard skin awnings, polished, brass-studded poles, and teams in uniform. But I have never seen one that tempted me. Even in the sweltering tropics it is better to walk. The planning of a safari, of course, calls for experience. One young man left the purchase of food to his wife. Her mind was staggered by the quantities required for a trek of several months, so she made certain economies. They were almost starving when at last they reached a trader's store.

Pilfering is a prospect that cannot be ignored. One traveller, nearly 1000 miles from the coast and a long way from any source of supply, opened the box supposed to contain whisky. There were stones inside, carefully chosen to make up the correct weight. The

remarks of another man who found curry powder in tins which should have held sugar are also unprintable.

Nevertheless, the safari is the finest way of all for those who seek contact with the old Africa. And no aero engine ever sang with such romantic rhythm as a winding ebony cavalcade of porters tramping out into 'the blue.'

III

Adventure, in the grim manner of Livingstone's day, still marches beside many a postman in Africa. The landings of air liners with the mails from Europe form only the opening of the story - a story that is carried on by camel and dug-out canoe, by pack-donkey, and at last by native runner into the far corners of the continent.

The passing of the centuries, indeed, has left few marks on lonely African territories where white men and women live in exile. I know places in the Kalahari and South-West Africa so remote that you must wait many

weeks for a reply to a letter. The best example, I think, was provided not long ago by a young man on the eastern edge of the Bechuanaland Protectorate who became engaged to a girl living in the west of the same country - about 450 miles away.

Each letter the young man wrote went south by train, then northwards again to Windhoek, and east to the railhead at Gobabis. From there the native postman travelled on foot, with pack-donkeys carrying the mails, food, and water for a journey of about 200 miles across the desert to the ranching settlement of Ghanzi. This postman usually covered the distance in a fortnight. A letter from one lover to the other 450 miles away was delivered a month after posting, all being well.

When I visited Ghanzi in 1936³ the donkeys were still plodding along with the mails, and the magistrate told me that he had often waited two months for a reply to a letter addressed to

³ The Ghanzi settlement is fully described in *Strange Africa*, by Lawrence G. Green (Stanley Paul)

Cape Town. A new air route across the Kalahari has just been surveyed, however, and the donkey mail will vanish without regrets.

It was at Ghanzi that I watched a red-fezzed, blue-jerseyed native constable setting out on camel-back with letters for the police post at Lehututu in the south, a distance of about 300 miles by the route he was obliged to follow, from water-hole to water-hole. He expected to arrive at Lehututu within three weeks, and he would rely largely on his rifle for food while travelling. The new air mail service will not benefit such outposts as Lehututu, and the camels will still shuffle and groan through the sand.

At the lonely Government centre of Maun in Bechuanaland the resident commissioner told me of the total loss of one consignment of His Majesty's mails. The postmen started northwards from Maun with the letter-bags on pack donkeys. Somewhere in the bush a troop of lions stampeded the donkeys; no doubt the lions feasted on their favourite delicacy. One day, perhaps, the mail-bags will be discovered.

But the native postman lost the trail, and a long search by motor-car failed.

Regular air mail machines will not be welcomed in these parts. When the first aeroplane arrived some years ago the startled natives told the commissioner: " God has come to spy on us."

Lions do not eat bicycles, and wisely the postal officials in Northern Rhodesia employ native cyclists to carry the mails. One regular run of 170 miles, from Fort Rosebery in the wilds to the railway at Ndola, is regarded as so hazardous that a party of six native postmen on bicycles always travel in company. As a rule, the journey takes six days. But the mails were late recently, and when the postmen arrived they explained that they had been delayed by lions. So many lions barred the narrow track that the postmen decided to form a rampart of bicycles. They turned their machines over, spun the wheels, held sticks against the spokes, and hoped that this unusual clatter would frighten the lions away. Unfortunately the lions appeared to be charmed by the sound and drew nearer. The postmen then bolted for the trees and

remained in the branches for six hours, until the lions departed.

Another queer postal service in Northern Rhodesia is the 'canoe mail' that is paddled up the Zambesi in dug-outs from Livingstone to the outpost of government at Mongu, 300 miles away. The journey against the current takes three weeks, but the mail returns in a fortnight. On rare and important occasions an aeroplane is sent, and then letters arrive from Livingstone in three hours!

One of the most tragic tales of letters that went missing was told to me by a post office man in South-West Africa, and it concerns the dreaded coastal Namib Desert. Men have died from thirst there in recent years, but this disaster occurred before the war, when Germany ruled the territory.

It was on 12 January, 1905 that an official named Rogge and Trooper Fiebecke rode out of the seaport of Luderitzbucht on horseback carrying mails and £1000 in German marks for the garrison at Bethanie inland. The menacing sand dunes swallowed them. A search was

organized, but the wind-blown sand had obliterated their tracks. They were given up for lost.

Six years later a wandering Hottentot picked up Fiebecke's belt and bayonet and reported his find to the police. A fresh search was carried out, again without success. But the following year a police patrol stumbled upon Rogge's body. In his note-book they read a farewell message to his mother and sister in Germany. The horses had run away, he said, and he was about to shoot himself to avoid death by thirst. Beside the body lay the bags of letters and the notes of 20,000 marks. The letters were delivered after nearly seven years in the dunes.

The whole drama was finally ended in 1928 by the discovery of the body of Trooper Fiebecke: You will find the graves of both these unhappy men in Luderitzbucht cemetery.

Native runners of many races are employed as postmen. Zulus are among the finest and most reliable; I believe one Zulu runner has carried the mails in a lonely area of Natal on six days a week for twenty-eight years; and he

has to run more than 20 miles a day to deliver letters at the different farms. In Nyasaland there is an official record of 1 native runner who covered 70 miles within twenty-four hours, carrying an important letter.

Runners in East Africa are provided with old-fashioned muskets as protection against animals. During long journeys they use the mail-bags as blankets. Lions, elephants, snake-bite, fever - all these dangers have taken toll of native runners, but the services are never interrupted for long.

Colonel Stevenson-Hamilton has quoted the feat of a native runner in the Transvaal low veld who covered 50 miles in fourteen hours, including four hours at night. He attributes the speed to the fact that the man was followed for hours by lions.

For sheer endurance over great distances, however, I do not think any other native can equal the performance of the Bushman in the Kalahari. I once met an elderly German in South-West Africa, a man who had been a Kalahari trader. When the Germans were at

war with the Hereros they posted a garrison on the eastern frontier, far out in the desert, to guard the famous water-hole at Rietfontein. This old German set up a store there for the soldiers and employed Bushmen to carry letters between Rietfontein and the nearest village, Gobabis. "Again and again those little fellows covered the double journey - a total distance of 340 miles - within five days," the old man declared.

There was a camel mail service in the northern Cape Province for many years, until balloon-tyred motor-cars conquered the desert dunes. A team of six camels visited the huge scattered farms to the north of Upington every week. One famous camel named 'Lalla,' imported from Australia, covered 100 miles in eight hours regularly. I think the rider felt the strain more than the camel.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

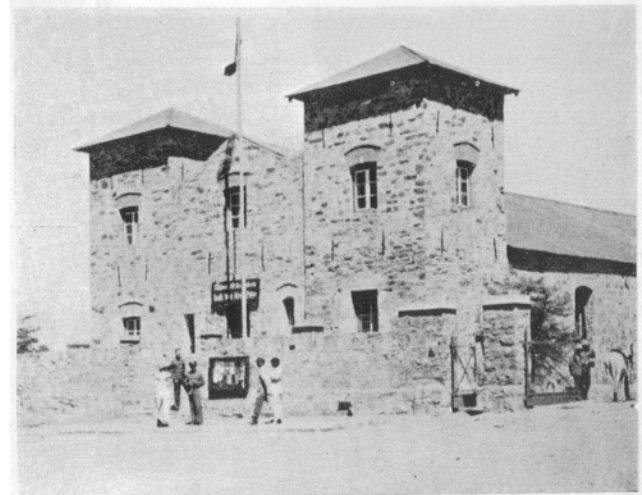
JUSTICE IN THE OUTPOSTS

Strange tales are told of the administration of justice in the tropical outposts of Africa. There are still colonies where, when a white man commits murder or other serious crime, he makes things extremely awkward for everyone. Some of the strangest tales of these places are true.

In the West African territories ruled by France, for example, it was the custom to advise a white offender to clear out on board the first ship. There were no gaols except for negroes. A sudden departure solved the problem.

One day I landed at a little harbour just below the equator; a place which had not changed much since the rarely days of the gin and ivory trade. I found the ramshackle hotel full of laughing residents, and learnt that a popular trader had been sentenced to imprisonment on a charge of evading taxes.

Sympathetic friends had removed the local gaol, a flimsy wood and iron building, during the previous night. The easy-going authorities had just cancelled the punishment, and the whole white population was celebrating the event.



A POLICE STATION IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA—STRONGLY BUILT FOR DEFENCE AGAINST THE NATIVES

Nyasaland settlers were similarly favoured, even in recent years. A white prisoner served

his sentence by taking up residence in the bungalow of a district official, enjoying his 'sundowner' as usual, without any great loss of liberty. In Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, a white convict discovered that he had merely to report at the police station every morning. He was often observed taking a glass of wine with the magistrate who had sentenced him. In other Congo towns, white prisoners were required to sleep in gaol, but they were permitted to go about their usual work during the day. A tactful man who desired a night off had no difficulty in obtaining permission.

Even in modern, civilized Southern Rhodesia, white prisoners are not treated harshly. Not long ago a party of unusually bright rogues happened to be gaoled together. Among them was a clever fellow who had collected £500 by means of a forged cheque. To retain his skill, he secured a cheque book from the gaol office, forged several well-known local signatures and supplied himself and his fellow prisoners with whisky and cigars. A lady friend in one of the bars of the town received through these forgeries silk

stockings, wrist-watches and other tokens of affections.

When the affair was exposed at last, the judge was anxious to know how the prisoner had been able to carry out these little enterprises. The explanation was simple. It appeared that the kind-hearted head warder had lent the white prisoners his car on several occasions so that they could break the monotony and take the air. And like honourable men, they had returned always before the stipulated hour.

During the Rhodesian pioneer days there was no prison in which a white man could serve a long sentence. On one occasion a business man was convicted of horse theft and awarded two years' hard labour. The prisoner was a good judge of horse-flesh, and so the authorities solved the problem by sending him to South-Africa to purchase remounts for the police. All expenses were paid, and the happy horse stealer drew a handsome commission on the deal.

When another white man was sent to gaol, he was appointed head warder; and the job was so

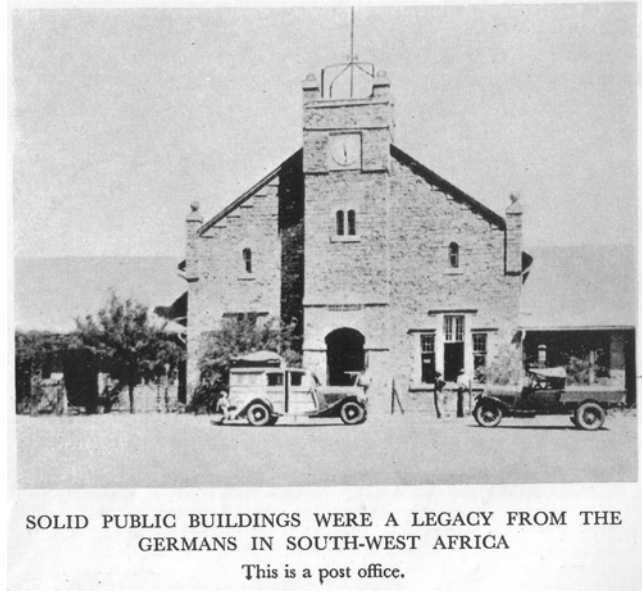
much to his taste that he remained in charge of the gaol at the end of his sentence.

White men in smart khaki uniforms could be seen in charge of native chain-gangs in Mombasa not so many years ago. They were prisoners, too, but their sentences never weighed heavily upon them. After a drink with their friends at the end of the day's work they would stroll through the gates of the old fortress before closing time.

In the early Rhodesian days it was difficult to find anyone willing to act as hangman. For a number of years one of the gaolers undertook this grim duty. But while he cheerfully performed his task when there was native murderers to be hanged, he stipulated in his contract that he should not be asked to hang a white man.

There exists in the archives at Salisbury a letter which illustrates the early troubles of the Department of justice in carrying out executions. There was a native awaiting the attentions of an amateur hangman who had been induced to undertake the job, and it was thought advisable

to write for a few hints on the subject from Cape Town.



So a letter was written and the reply from the Cape 'Jack Ketch' (who must have been an enthusiast) was lengthy and rich in detail. The concluding sentence ran like this:

'If these instructions are faithfully followed I guarantee that satisfaction will be given to all parties.'

Murder trials in which white people are charged are rare, both in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Not until August 1938 was a white man executed in Northern Rhodesia. There has been only one hanging of a European in the history of Southern Rhodesia. That was in 1893, and the crime was so brutal that a possibility of lynching arose. Dr. Jameson addressed the crowd before the trial and assured them that the murderer would be hanged.

Dr. Jameson afterwards presided at the trial, and the man was hanged - a sequence of events which brought a reprimand from the High Commissioner.

There was no public executioner in Rhodesia at that time and a volunteer had to be found. It is a strange commentary on mob behaviour that this amateur executioner was afterwards ostracized and forced to leave the country.

The second white person to be sentenced to death in Southern Rhodesia was a woman, but the sentence was commuted.

In Bulawayo once a man was on trial for a serious assault on a white woman and feeling was running high. The prisoner was in the dock before Magistrate Powys Jones, but the crowd thought justice might be served in a different way.

There was a Yankee cattle man among them, and he was commissioned to secure the prisoner. With a clever throw, the Yank lassoed the man as he stood in the dock, and when Jones looked up his prisoner was disappearing through the window. The angry crowd threw the loose end of the rope over the lamp-post and were getting down to serious business when the Magistrate rushed out.

"Men of Bulawayo," he said, "play the game!"

"We are playing the game," came the shouted chorus. But fortunately common sense prevailed and the lynching was not carried out.

Another true story is told of a white settler who was condemned to death on a charge of

murdering a native. There were extenuating circumstances and a petition was drawn up and presented, with the result that the - sentence was commuted to a fine of £250. The convicted man went to Dr. Jameson, then Administrator, and pleaded that he had no money to pay so large a fine.

"Then give me an I.O.U.," declared Dr. Jim impatiently. And that I.O.U. is probably still in the coffers of the Chartered Company.

There was a search for a volunteer executioner in the Transvaal Republic days, when a native murderer was under sentence of death at Potchefstroom. It happened that a white criminal was in gaol at the time for robbery. He was asked if he would act as executioner.

"How much do I get?" was the prompt inquiry. He was offered £5 and a horse, the stipulation being made that he should be out of the Republic within twenty-four hours of the completion of his job as executioner. He accepted.

Hangmen received definite status as officials of the Union Prisons Department not long ago,

and two executioners were appointed, one at a salary of £300 a year, another at £250.

In the past each province had its hangmen, who had other occupations between executions, and received a fee on each occasion when their services were required. Thus a former Cape Town hangman was in private life a shop-keeper. These men usually chose their own assistants and trained them to take their places.

Some years ago, when executions were held in country towns, there were local hangmen even in small places. The custom in recent years, however, was to bring persons condemned to death to Cape Town or the nearest large centre. Now all executions take place at Pretoria.

The very nature of the hangman's task has driven some men to drink. Prison officials have not always been able to rely on the appearance of the executioner at the proper time and in the right condition for his sinister duty. A prison governor in the Transvaal once had to carry out an execution himself owing to the absence of the hangman.

There is a technique to be mastered if executions are to be carried out swiftly and humanely; in the past many hangings have been bungled with painful effects on all present. Mr. Napier Devitt, the former Johannesburg magistrate, tells several stories of ropes that broke under the strain. The Union Government now imports hangman's rope-lengths arrive by air mail from a firm in England specializing in the manufacture of this rope.

Nairobi, capital of Kenya, has lost something of the frontier spirit; but many settlers still remember wild days and wilder nights before law and order became firmly established. A bungalow was comfortably furnished by the Government when white prisoners first became a problem, and one rule was strictly enforced. It was simply this: 'Prisoners must not make use of clubs and hotels.'

Executions in Kenya were, for some years, carried out by military firing squads. As the colony developed it was decided that the time had come to appoint a hangman and the position was duly advertised. To the surprise of officials

there were many applications. An ex-seaman was selected because of his knowledge of ropes and knots, and the work made a pleasant addition to his earnings as driver of the town steam-roller. (He received a fee of £5 whenever his services were required.) The ex-seaman showed great pride in his position, and always appeared in a black suit. Later in the day, like the famous hangmen of England, he would be found in one of the bars spinning a lurid yarn of the day's great event.

One day the hangman was taking his whisky-and-soda in the presence of a well-known titled settler. He eyed the settler with obvious interest for some time, until he was asked what he was thinking about. "I was just thinking, sir," replied the hangman, "that a six-foot drop would do you nicely."

The Portuguese colonies in Africa have ways of their own, and not all of their prisons are pleasant residences. Fifteen years ago I was shown over the great grey stone fort that dominates the little island of Mozambique, first outpost of Portugal in East Africa. My convict guide pointed out a white woman sitting on a shaded balcony in the

courtyard. She had a tea-tray before her, and a cigarette, and I thought she might be the wife of the prison governor. "Kill husband - so!" exclaimed my guide, drawing an imaginary knife across his throat. She was serving a life sentence, and I heard recently that she was still there.

Angola is the main penal settlement of Portugal, and the streets of Loanda at one time were often full of *sentenciados* weeding the cobble-stones or resting gracefully in the shade. Visitors were often puzzled by a monotonous tune-a 'dah ... dee . . . da ... de ... rat-tat-tat-tat,' repeated incessantly by a band within the prison walls. That was the punishment for minor breaches of prison discipline. They were put in the prison band and made to play one bar of music, and one only. - 'Dah ... dee . . . da ... de ... rat-tat-tat-tat.'

The prison has now been moved to a glaring desert outside Mossamedes. Others, more fortunate, have been sent to a new convict settlement in the Cape Verde Islands, where the camp is happily situated above a blue bay fringed with palms. The Cape Verde Islands have long been used as a place of banishment for

political offenders. These *deportados* keep shops, bars, and restaurants, or simply live idly on the allowance of is. 8d. a day granted to political exiles.

But there is no unyielding red tape among the Portuguese in Africa. In one of their tropical seaports the British Consul invited a number of officials to dinner, an event keenly anticipated, for the Consul's table and wine cellar were the best in the town. On the day of the dinner, however, the Consul's cook was arrested for taking part in some brawl and, on hearing the news, the Consul hastily telephoned his guests to postpone the dinner. Within an hour the cook had been released - no bail required. The officials were not going to be cheated out of their evening's entertainment by any mere legal formality.

Easy-going Africa is changing. In most territories today the erring white man will find a tropical Pentonville ready to receive him. But in a sweltering land, where a few whites rule thousands of blacks, conditions can never be quite so rigid, the routine quite so strict as that of

a prison in Britain. It will be a sad day for Africa when the element of comedy departs and the local lock-up becomes 'durance vile' indeed.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AFRICAN TRAINS

Go to easy-going Africa if you enjoy comedy and adventure on the railway track. I have lively memories of my journeys in tropical trains up and down the continent, and through lands where the right of way is still disputed by giants of the jungle. Engine-drivers have told me strange tales.

Everyone has heard the epic story of the lions that terrorized the native labourers who built the 'Equator Line' from Mombasa to Lake Victoria early this century. These man-eaters of Tsavo killed a hundred men, including a white engineer who was travelling in a railway compartment to the scene of slaughter to hunt the marauders. It is not generally known, however, that an infuriated rhinoceros once charged a locomotive on this

line, causing serious damage before it died. Herds of antelope, zebra, and giraffe, thousands strong, have dashed across the narrow track in rainy weather, tearing up embankments and stopping all traffic. Collisions between trains and giraffes have often been reported.

The Mombasa-Nairobi trains run to time-table nowadays. There was a time when the passengers were allowed to sit on the roofs of the coaches to watch the natural zoo rolling past. Wood fuel was used then, and the sparks were troublesome; but anyone who wished to shoot a buck had only to notify the engine-driver and the train would wait. One of the early drivers had a pleasant habit of pulling up when he felt thirsty and walking slowly down the train until someone offered him a suitable bottle. Such whims are not permitted in these less picturesque days.

Only a year or two ago, however, a mail train driver in Uganda observed an elephant thundering down the track away from the engine. "I sounded my whistle, but the elephant pounded on between the metals,"

reported the driver. "As the engine came close the elephant drew aside, screamed, waited with trunk held aloft for a few seconds, then reached deliberately into the cab and tried to seize the native fireman. The terrified native flung himself down on the footplate, and it was a long time before I could persuade him that the danger had passed."

An even more alarming incident occurred on the Trans-Zambesi route to Nyasaland. A train came round a bend on the wooded Cheringoma plateau and crashed into a herd of elephants. Five elephants were killed, and the breakdown gang had to jack up the locomotive to haul one huge carcass off the line. This railway now passes over the longest bridge in the world. (Africa can also claim the longest railway platform, 2200 feet in length, at Bulawayo - favourite stroll for early risers, thanks to level asphalt and shelter from the sun.)

Rhodesian trains have been obliged to halt while herds of elephants crossed the track. In the Northern Transvaal a goods train driver

slowed down when he saw twelve full grown lions sunning themselves on the rails. They moved off before the engine reached them. In the same area a *kudu* bull, hypnotized by the headlight, galloped into an engine and died on the cowcatcher. There, too, dense swarms of locusts - and in the rainy season millipedes have made the rails so slippery that trains could not proceed up gradients. The sanding apparatus is useless. Gangs have to be sent ahead to clean the steel.

Certain lines from the 'Lambeth Walk' might be applied to the remote African railways where assuredly 'ev'rything's free-and-easy, do as you darn well pleasey.' Away up-country in Nigeria there is a fork in the line. One branch goes to the walled city of Kano, the other to a tin mine. An inexperienced pointsman once sent the Kano passenger train to the tin mine, while a lot of empty tin trucks arrived safely at Kano. It happened at night, and no one appears to have noticed the mistake until the trains arrived at the wrong stations.

The station buildings and railways signs in Nigeria were used (until the natives were warned) as targets by black sportsmen with muzzle-loaders. Telegraph wires were gladly seized and rolled into bangles. This nuisance still persists in many African territories, for it is impossible to guard the whole length of a jungle railway.

Nowadays the Rhodesian railways are conducted like any other modern transport system. It was not always so. Soon after the line to Bulawayo opened, a truck loaded with goods for stores (including whisky) was lost. It seemed incredible; but the most careful investigation as far south as Cape Town revealed that the truck had vanished.

Actually it had been stolen, and this was the method. The thieves had uncoupled the truck near a forgotten 'spur' in the line leading to a disused ballast pit. They had run the truck into the pit, used a charge of dynamite to cover the truck with soil, and then looted it at their leisure. Months afterwards the truck was found and the thieves traced.

In those days the Rhodesian engines burnt wood fuel, and on a long run the fireman usually found his supplies dwindling. The train stopped, and the passengers were turned out to chop wood. Sometimes the passengers, puzzled by a long delay, would look out and see driver and fireman returning with a buck they had shot. On one famous occasion a main line train shunted back several miles in the night to enable a drunken miner to search for his false teeth which he had dropped out of the window.

One of Africa's craziest little railways runs between Kinshasa and Matadi in the Belgian Congo. In spite of its eccentricities, I look back on that narrow-gauge line with pleasure. It follows the old slave caravan route from Stanley Pool over the Crystal Mountains to the river port where the ocean steamers load; and Joseph Conrad described it faithfully in *Heart of Darkness*. They have doubled the track since his day, and mine. No doubt the modern rolling stock is luxurious; there was room for improvement. When I was there the antiquated 'coffeepot' engine hauled the miniature box-

like coaches over a single track 250 miles long and 29 inches in width.

Chinese labourers were imported in 1890 to build this toy railway, and they were still at work when the century ended. It is said of this railway (and of others in Africa) that one Chinese died for every sleeper laid, and one white engineer for every kilometre of track completed. Yet even these casualties cannot be compared with the deaths among the slaves on whose bones the line was built. In one year, ten thousand perished.

A grim background, but I found nothing but good humour in the first-class coach. There were sixteen of us, all joining the French mailboat at Matadi. In the hard chair facing me was a young French official who had travelled from the island of Reunion right across Africa to take up a new post at Pointe Noire. The other fourteen were French also, all friendly to the stranger in their midst.

Some were officers of the French Colonial infantry, with anchor badges on their khaki uniforms to show that they served the Republic

overseas. Civilians with silver buttons on their white tunics were administrators of districts somewhere in the dark heart of the French Congo. There was only one woman - the mother of a dark-eyed, well-behaved little boy who soon revealed himself as a tremendous eater.

For three years these exiles had collected taxes, drilled black troops, garrisoned little frontier posts as far North as Lake T'chad. They had seen enough of sun and palms and sand, and they were aching for a glimpse of Paris boulevards.

It was early morning when we left Kinshasa. At ten o'clock the mother of the young trenchman cut up pine-apples and handed a slice to everyone amid a chorus of *Merci bien!*

Then a fat Frenchman roared "Toto!" A small black boy appeared from the balcony at the end of the car. His master had a box of ice, and invited us to hand our bottles of warm beer to Toto. During the day Toto was kept busy carrying iced beer and washing plates and glasses.

At eleven o'clock it was time for the 'second breakfast.' A lieutenant had a cake soaked in brandy. The small boy seized a slice while his mother was not looking. He gulped it down with relish, fiery liquid and all, and resumed his angelic expression. Cold roasted chickens were set out on the little tables, and long, twisted French rolls. At wayside stations we leant out of the windows and bought red oranges, with the thin skin of the perfect fruit.

On the second day we crossed the Crystal Mountains. This barrier of tawny stone runs all the way from the Cameroons to Angola, shutting off the coast from the vast central basin of the Congo. Bush fires crackle on each side of the line, sometimes filling the carriages with smoke. It was dark when we reached the enormous gorge through which the Congo finally cuts its way to the sea. There gleamed a row of port-hole lights - a promise of luxury I was eager to taste after long African travel.

Another slow and arduous job was that tackled by the Germans in South-West Africa after the discovery of a rich copper mine in, the

remote Northern territory. The railway had to cross the coastal Namib desert. Construction of a line with the rails only two feet apart started from the seaport of Swakopmund in 1903. The campaign against the rebellious Herero tribe was in progress, it was impossible to secure labour in the territory, and finally an Italian contractor was given the task! He arrived with three hundred Italian workmen.

Meanwhile the line was urgently needed for military purposes, and the Germans decided to push on with the work at all costs. About seven hundred more Italians were imported, and five hundred Ovambo natives were found. Then began an irritating series of strikes which delayed construction and hampered the campaign.

Water was the great need. For the first 85 miles the desert yielded no water. Every drop had to be distilled from sea water and sent up-country by special tank trains.

Not until 1907 was the copper mine linked with the sea 340 miles away. The line, with its tiny coaches and trucks, still serves the mine and

the farming areas of the North. Passengers rattling along at the solemn speed of 25 miles an hour may still see magnificent herds of gemsbok, zebra, and ostrich.

When I first called at Zanzibar, there was a famous little railway linking the town with the clove plantations at Bububu. An official, years ago, received a free pass whenever he travelled in Europe and England; and he always reminded his hosts that they would receive the same privilege on the Zanzibar system. He omitted to mention that his island railway was only 7 miles in length.

Another amusing story is told of the origin of this line. It seems that an enterprising American engineer approached the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1905 and asked for a railway concession. In return, he offered to equip the palace with electric light and fans. The contract was signed, and the shortest railway in Africa paid substantial dividends until motor transport developed. The line was torn up in 1928.

It is impossible to discuss African railways with any pioneer without mention of the name of

the late George Pauling. He was the greatest tropical railway contractor of his day, and his exploits and achievements were remarkable. When Pauling set off into unmapped bush to survey a new route, he was usually accompanied by a French chef and three hundred native carriers. The 'chop boxes' contained rare foods and champagne; an entertainment given by Pauling in the wilds rivalled the best a civilised hotel could have offered.

Pauling built the railway north of the Victoria Falls to the Belgian Congo border. One stretch of this line runs arrow-straight for 72 miles - a record for Africa. Pauling's men set up a record for the whole world, one that still stands, when they laid $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles of track in twelve hours' work.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CABLE SHIP

*There is no sound, no echo of sound, in
the deserts of the deep,
Or the great grey level plains of ooze
where the shell-burred cables creep.*

KIPLING.

What a weird task it is, this business of fishing for cable in 'the utter dark, where the blind white sea-snakes are.' And how strange that so few writers, apart from H. de Vere Stacpoole (who was once surgeon in the cable ship) and Kipling, should have dramatized the lives of the men who repair the deep-sea cables. Their adventures would fill a library.

For years it had been my ambition to see a cable ship at work. I had been on board several of these sleek white vessels with their raked yellow funnels, ships often mistaken for luxurious steam yachts. And I had met the men of the shore stations, too, in remote tropical

places like Sierra Leone and Mauritius, Mozambique, and Zanzibar. But it was not until the *Norseman* came to Table Bay recently to lay a new inshore cable that I was able to watch a job of work in progress.

At one time cable ships lay in port month after month waiting for an emergency call. The world was cut up into comparatively small patrol areas and a large fleet was maintained in readiness to put to sea at a moment's notice.

Those days are over. When I was on board the *Norseman* I learnt that the modern cable ship covers an enormous area and is kept at sea, on an average, for about three hundred days a year.

These men see not only the great ports of the world, but the remote corners-monsoon-swept coral atolls, lonely volcanic peaks, tropical rivers, surf-beaten coasts. Their movements are unpredictable. 'Pernambuco-St. Vincent line dead,' comes an urgent message. The *Norseman* steams out of Rio to repair the break. She may be away for a few weeks or many months - the 'breakdown gang' of the sea can never tell where

the next fault will be detected or how long the job will take them.

In the *Norseman's* chart-house I was shown the ground the ship had covered during the one year. Her 'beat' includes some of the North Atlantic and all the South Atlantic. She cruises from the Azores to Cape Town on the east, including the whole West African coast. On the west it stretches from the steaming heat of the West Indies to the gales of the Falkland Islands. There are 40,000 miles of cable in those seas, and the ship must steam 35,000 miles a year to maintain communication. Most of the breaks and leaks occur on the Brazilian coast, but the *Norseman* goes much farther a-field, as her log reveals.

During May that year, for example, she was renewing sections of cable in the River Plate. Then Rio called, and throughout June and July she was hooking and splicing the troublesome coast cables. In August she steered for the penal settlement of Fernando Noronha, almost on the equator - the Brazilian 'Devil's Island' where the convicts live contentedly.

"We dug a trench for the shore end of the cable with the aid of a hundred murderers," the *Norseman's* chief officer told me. "A happy, hard-working crowd they were, guarded by a fellow-convict. The manager of the French cable company, who had lived on Fernando Noronha for twenty years, declared that he preferred the island to any other cable station in the world."

Back to Rio, where the *Norseman* spent September repairing bay lines. Two months on the Brazilian coast followed, and towards Christmas the ship was grappling in deep water off Pernambuco. From there she crossed the ocean to the Cape Verde Islands to renew all 'shore ends.' January and February found her making more deep-water repairs to the Pernambuco-St. Vincent line, and rolling in the West African shallows.

March brought the hardest task of the year. Cable laid half a century ago between St. Vincent and Bathurst, lying 20 miles deep, had to be raised and repaired. Again and again the *Norseman* steamed across the area of the break seeking the thin wire on the ocean bed far

below. The depth of water was so great that the cable when lifted would not support its own weight. Ten times it broke under the strain. The problem was solved by splicing in a new section of cable 12 miles long, but the job cost £20,000 and lasted eighteen days. After that effort the crew of the *Norseman* were not sorry to see Cape Town.

There is a standard textbook, known in the service as the *Child's Guide to Cable Work*, which explains many of the intricate operations carried out every year. But often enough the cable ship men face difficulties which have to be overcome by sheer ingenuity.

"The worst place in the world for cable work is the Congo estuary," one officer told me. "Channels hundreds of fathoms deep are scoured out by floods. The banks on either side are as steep as the sides of a house. You can imagine the task of laying cable accurately from the shallows, across the deep trench, to the shallows on the far side."

Then there are the beaches of West Africa, where hundreds of natives in surf-boats are

drowned every year. I had a taste of that sensational experience myself on the Gold Coast some years ago - racing ashore in a boat manned by paddlers, on the crest of a roaring wave. To land a cable under such conditions is sometimes impossible. So the cable ship anchors beyond the surf and sends a line ashore with a rocket. The beach party then drag the heavy cable through the surf.

Captains of cable steamers are compelled to take their ships into positions that would horrify other master mariners. It is one of the peculiar risks of their calling. Liners and freighters are able to steer clear of poorly charted coast-lines and dangerous bays, but wherever the cables run the cable ships must go. The *Norseman* poked her clipper bows among the treacherous archipelago of Portuguese Guinea not long ago, using charts dated 1826. Fortunately cable ship officers share with naval surveyors the reputation of being the most highly skilled navigators in the world. One seldom hears of the loss of a cable ship.

Great skill is needed, too, in finding the broken ends of a cable in mid-ocean. The well-known electrical test, which measures the resistance of the cable and gives the distance, is useful; but cables are not always laid in a straight line, and allowance must be made for the wide curve of 'slack.' Thus the sextant, chronometer, and in recent years directional wireless must be cleverly handled if that unmarked spot on the vast expanse of ocean is to be found without costly waste of time.

In spite of efficiency, cable repairs may defeat the experts for long periods. The classic example, I believe, was an Aden-Bombay break which occurred in 1 900 fathoms (11,400 feet). For two hundred and-fifty-one days communications were interrupted. The cable ship, hindered by the monsoon, took one hundred and three working days to complete the job.

During submarine earthquakes in the North Atlantic, in 1929, more than half the cables between Britain and the United States were broken. This meant sending for every available cable steamer in both hemispheres - the Cambria,

lying in Table Bay, was among the fleet that rushed to the scene.

A single repair in mid-Atlantic once cost £95,000. If such breaks occurred often, the deep-sea cables (with their advantages of secrecy and reliability) would not pay for maintenance. But as a matter of fact the cables in great depths are seldom disturbed. The Cape Town - St. Helena line, laid in 1898, has only once broken in deep water. That was due to the cable having been laid over a valley in a range of submarine mountains rising 7500 feet from the ocean bed. After many years the strained cable parted.

A cable safely embedded in Kipling's 'plains of Ooze' should last for ever. One Atlantic cable laid in 1873 is still in use. The gutta-percha covering, which suffers severely in heat, is imperishable under water. Enemies of cable do not exist in the deep places. Shallow water is a different story.

In shallow water a cable (worth £2000 a mile) may be cut by trawling gear, or by fouling a ship's anchor. Currents are

responsible for chafe. Corrosive acid in mud (such as that found on the old Cape Town-Mossamedes cable) may eat away the insulation. Then the chemists are called in, and new stainless steel wrappings are devised to guard the precious cable. Marine growths, too, may cause damage.

"I have seen a two-inch cable come up festooned with sponges, seaweed, worms, and shells 4 feet in diameter," an officer told me. But Cable enemy number one, the boring teredo worm, has been vanquished. This destroyer of communications was in the habit of eating through the jute wrapping and penetrating the steel armouring wires. Now they give the teredo a complete covering of brass tape to tackle - and the teredo feeds elsewhere.

A shark once caused a cable leak, and left a tooth as proof. Such encounters are rare. Cable men are great shark fishers, however, and the Chinese engine-room hands aboard the *Norseman* never miss a chance. To them it

means not only sport but the beloved shark's-fin soup.

Once a whale became tangled in a loop of cable. The struggle broke the line, and the cable ship hauled the dead whale to the surface not long afterwards. More than once fragments of lost ships have been brought up by the grapnels of cable ships. I believe a human skeleton has appeared in a tangle of cable.

"Cable is funny stuff," one of the old hands remarked to me. "You must treat it with the greatest respect, for it is valuable, and it may be dangerous. Handled by experts, it will usually coil without a kink and pay out perfectly. But if it takes charge in the tanks, it runs like an angry snake, flicking death in all directions."

On deck a sudden break may kill several men. The cable splays out into a mass of steel and copper whip lashes, too wide and too quick to dodge. Such a scene is never forgotten. The fact that it seldom occurs is largely due to the skill of the men who handle it.

Expose cable to the sun, and you will soon have caused a loss of thousands of pounds. It is

constructed for sea water only, and the circular tanks in every cable; ship are kept flooded whenever possible. Oil must not touch it. A zealous South American quarantine official wanted to spray the *Norseman's* stock cable with paraffin to destroy mosquitoes. He might have ruined most of the 200 miles of cable in the ship's three tanks.

Grappling for cable is easy in shallow water-they call that 'boat-hook work.' In mid-ocean it means crawling ahead at one mile an hour on a zigzag course with an officer sitting on the taut grapnel rope in the bows feeling the vibrations of the hook dragging along the sea-floor. There are 'round bottom' grapnels for mud, chain grapnels for rock or coral, sliding prong grapnels for sand; but the most ingenious is the cutting grapnel used on a rope a mile or two in length. It is obviously impossible to raise a deep cable in one piece. The cutting grapnel finds and seizes the cable, cuts it, and brings an end to the surface. Then the other end is gripped in the same way, a new section is spliced in, and the repaired cable sinks back to rest.

An instrument known as the dynamometer - a needle on a black and white scale - shows the strain in hundred-weights and tons during the grappling operations. But the human dynamometer sitting on the rope is more sensitive. "Stop her!" shouts the officer as he feels the gentle, lifting sensation that tell him the cable has been hooked. If the ship steamed ahead too far the cable would be broken.

Splicing is the bo'sun's job, and a cable steamer's bo'sun must be a master of the 'art of marrying' each separate wire to its partner. Every splice is labelled with the date, the ship's name and other details - words which may see daylight again half a century later and prove that the work was well done. The bo'sun spits on the splice for luck. Ropes holding the cable are placed on chopping boards.

"Stand by - slack away starboard - slack away port-cut!"

The axes come down together, and the slender, slimy, black cable finds its own way back to the primeval ooze. If it has been a long job the men will cheer.

And then, at full speed, the *Norseman* steers back to port. Communication has been restored.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

PEARLS

"Pearls, fine pearls, in this street, sare," announced my guide.

Thus one discovers riches in unexpected places, for the Street of the Jewellers in Zanzibar is a dark coral rabbit-warren, where the shops are caverns and craftsmen are like gnomes.

Nevertheless, this is the way to romance, and these hours on islands washed by the warm seas of the equator are the times one remembers. I followed the guide and found a spectacled Cingalese with a comb in his long hair bent over a charcoal fire, hammering out a golden ornament. He put his work aside and showed me his pearls.

They were for the wealthy Arabs of the island he explained, my Swahili guide interpreting. Sometimes a rich *Amerikani* would buy; but

there had been a great pearl market at Zanzibar centuries before the first white travellers arrived, and the sultans and merchants were still his best customers.

Fine pearls they were, indeed, in the shop of the Cingalese.

"Here is one from the African coast-from Bazaruto islands," he remarked, placing a drop-shaped rose pearl in the brass cup of a scale with silken cords. "Just one grain - I sell for sixteen pounds."

The pearl lay there gleaming like a pool at dawn, but I was not tempted. He brought out yellow pearls that had come with other merchandise from the Persian Gulf; pure white pearls from the Red Sea; baroque, in freak shapes, fished up in Zanzibar waters; and pearls of beautiful lustre, blue and green, oval, egg-shaped or magnificently round, from the oyster banks of Ceylon.

It was there I learnt that expert pearl dealers can tell the origin of a pearl at a glance; just as diamond sorters can name the mine or river from which a diamond was won.

This was confirmed by a leading Ceylon jeweller who gave me further details. Australian pearls lack texture, though they have the prized white tint. Black pearls of first quality are found in the South Pacific, near Tahiti. Mexican pearls are small but of good shape, and with pearls shape determines value to a far greater extent than colour.

Not only do experienced pearl dealers recognize, almost by instinct, the birthplace of each pearl they handle, they also remember all the large pearls that pass through their hands. No need to turn up records. Under the magnifying glass these drops that mimic gold and silver, the whole rainbow, speak to those who love them. A woman may know each pearl in her own necklace, but a dealer has thousands of memorable pearls filed away in his mind.

From first to last pearl dealing is a wild gamble. The diver takes death as a partner; the middle-men have to make instant and difficult decisions; the jewellers who skin pearls may treble the value or, with one false stroke,

shatter a little queen of the sea. From the oyster-beds of the tropics to the Rue Lafayette there is no certainty in the trade.

No one will deny that the diver runs the greatest risks. One day in Ceylon I drove out to Negombo, the fishing village by the lagoon, visited by thousands of ships' passengers every year. On the beach below the old Dutch fort I noticed a man with chest sunken in a wasted body, eyes blood-shot, limbs paralysed.

"Pearl diver," said the taxi driver with a grin, for in the East affliction arouses little sympathy. "All old pearl divers looking like that man, *sahib*. Many rupees, dive too much - then feeneesh!"

Yet this cripple was really one of the survivors. Others are gripped by giant clams, trapped 5 fathoms below the surface if there is no one to slash them free; the highest form of life destroyed by one of the lowest. A stout-hearted native caught in this way has been known to hack his own leg off.

The shark and the octopus take their toll. Some become victims of poisonous sea-snakes

and stinging things. The very coral on the sea floor is an enemy, for cuts turn septic and there are often no doctors. Every gale on the pearly banks swamps a few crazy boats and drowns the crews. When all these perils have been avoided there is still the menace of greed - the quarrels and fights with knives over little crystals of wealth brought up from the ocean.

Five years, that is the average working life of a 'skin diver,' a man who goes down boldly with only the air in his lungs to earn a living under water. Pressure gets him in the end. It is a ghastly, unseen thing, this pressure of 50, 60, 70 lb. a square inch, that squeezes a man all the time he is down, gradually steals his strength, deafens him, and sometimes blinds him, too. No other work in the world calls for so much effort and strains the human body to the same extent.

Try holding your breath for a mere sixty seconds and you will begin to feel what the pearl diver experiences. In the Persian Gulf (where pearls worth £2,000,000 were recovered during the wonderful 1926 season) the usual length of a dive is ninety seconds. The diver often works in

14 fathoms - 84 feet of water. He stands on a heavy stone tied to a thick rope, carrying a bag for the oysters round his neck, wearing leather toe guards, and sinks to the bottom. He gathers from thirty to fifty oysters, and he makes about thirty descents a day. That means at least an hour a day with lungs strained to the utmost and the sea crushing mercilessly all the time. No wonder the life of a pearl diver is short.

I made careful inquiries in Colombo and other places to fix the longest stay under water ever recorded. Two minutes is probably the maximum for any depth. A famous Arab diver was timed in 7 fathoms some years ago-one hundred and nine seconds. There are also tales from the Pacific of men who could remain down for four, five, even six minutes, but these are hard to believe.

Tamil and Malay divers have not the endurance of the Arabs; fifty seconds, and they are up for air. After a long, deep dive the men bleed from the mouth, ears, and nose, but they go on diving. Nose-clips help them to keep the water out. The Arab wears a verse from the

Koran round his wrist to protect him from sharks.

Japan is the only country where girls are employed as divers. They work on the shallow beds of cultured pearls, and are never under water for more than thirty seconds.

The numbers who find employment in the pearling industry are enormous. A fleet of dhows five hundred strong sets out when the Persian Gulf season opens, and each dhow has from twenty to thirty divers on board. Altogether there are one hundred and fifty thousand men in the fleet, counting the shell-openers and sailors. The use of diving apparatus is forbidden by the sheikh.

Ceylon has always been an intermittent pearl producer, and little has been done in recent years. The oysters disappear; then, after intervals of years, they return and the Government proclaims that the banks will be open during February, March or April the following year.

Immediately the divers flock from many Eastern ports to the shores of Ceylon. A mushroom town appears. Marichchikkaddi it is

called; a cluster of thatched huts that grow overnight to a roaring native metropolis. The Governor of Ceylon goes into residence there, supported by officials and police. A temporary hospital is built. There is a gaol and a post office, a rest-house for white visitors, shops, and cinemas. Cholera is the main danger when forty thousand people gather suddenly in a town of newly-built huts. The modern sanitation system has reduced the risk. A few feverish weeks pass and Marichchikkadi is deserted again.

The divers, who deserve a fair share of the profit, are always in debt. Often they sell for £10 a pearl worth £200. The Japanese and Malays, who are indispensable in the Australian industry (in spite of the White Australia policy) may earn £500 a season - for five seasons. Few, as I have shown, are able to work much longer than that. Yet they are always ready to gamble their pay away.

In Australian waters, of course, diving-suits are used, and the divers are dragged slowly along the bottom, feet just touching, while they scan the sea floor for shell. Thus

several miles can be covered in a day and every oyster bed gutted. The long hours of work take toll of these men, too, and there is much paralysis. With them the chief perils are those of breaking the face-glass of the helmet on coral, or having the air-pipe severed by sharp coral.

Famous pearls, like great diamonds, are given names and make stories for themselves as they appear and disappear through the centuries. Mary, Queen of Scots, possessed a black pearl necklace. It vanished, and did not come to light again for three hundred years, when a cyclist purchased the pearls as beads in a village shop in Scotland. The cyclist, ignorant of their value, paid 12s. for them, and a Bond Street jeweller identified the string.

Largest in the world is the 'Hope Pearl,' 454 carats (roughly 4 ounces), and now valued at about £12,000. It is pear-shaped, the colour, varying from bronze to green, detracting from the value.

Then there is that queer Australian freak known as the 'Southern Cross' - nine pearls

joined by nature and forming a perfect cross. 'La Pellegrine,' once housed in a Moscow museum but now lost to sight, was regarded as the most perfect pearl ever recovered. It was round and flawless, weighing 28 carats, and worth £40,000 before the war. Where is 'La Pellegrine' now?

Probably the most valuable pearl in the world today arrived in London from the Persian Gulf in 1931. It is a rose-coloured pearl the size of a hazelnut, without a blemish, and valued at £150,000.

Cultured pearls, produced by inserting an irritant in the oyster, can never affect the value of the genuine pearl. Two women may both be wearing matched pearl necklaces in the same hotel lounge. An expert handling them would find it difficult to say which was the genuine necklace costing £3000 and which the £300 necklace of cultured pearls. He would need the apparatus of X-ray type now used by the trade. One might go further, and introduce a third woman wearing a necklace of artificial pearls worth 30s. Again the expert would hesitate. Yet the value of real pearls

remains high, simply because there is always a demand for the genuine thing, and women are not always content with the cleverest imitation.

CHAPTER TWENTY

KILLERS OF AFRICA

I

Lions make news somewhere in Africa every day. Within the past twelve months I have met two men who claimed new lion-shooting records. I have travelled far into lion-infested territories, heard fresh tales of the villainy - and the cowardice - of lions, and felt my own heart pounding against my ribs when I encountered a pride of lions at night at the water-hole.

Donald Bain, the Kalahari hunter, held the lion-killing record for years. He found fifteen lions gorging on a buffalo carcass and shot five within six seconds. Then a young German farmer, Ernst Luchtenstein, of Keetmanshoop, South-West Africa, proved his claim to the honour. Luchtenstein's native servants reported that a

family of lions was attacking the sheep on the farm. Luchtenstein went out with his rifle, found the lions, emptied his magazine into them, propped up six dead lions in line and photographed them. It was a poor little picture he gave me, but there can be no doubt about his great skill as a marksman.

Only a few months after Luchtenstein's effort a motor mechanic named Tom Hughes was driving along the lonely track between Maun and the Victoria Falls. He saw eight lions close to the road ahead. Stopping the car, he slid out with his rifle and dropped three lions immediately with shots in the head, throat, and heart.

His fourth shot wounded a lioness with cubs and, true to type, the lioness charged him. At 20 yards the lioness halted for the final spring, tail swishing angrily. Hughes put a bullet between the eyes. He did not fail again - the next three shots brought down three lions.

When Hughes reached Maun that night he had six lions, weighing 2500 lb., in the back of his car. There was no room for the seventh. But he had broken the African record, and I think his

seven lions within about thirty seconds will remain unsurpassed for a long time.

The late H.A. Walker once shot six lions in a day in Southern Rhodesia. Luchtenstein and Hughes got their lions almost in one breath. Even the late 'Yank' Allen, most famous professional lion hunter of his time, never scored six in a day, though he shot more than three hundred before he died from pneumonia.



S.A.R. & H. photo

'LIONS MAKE NEWS SOMEWHERE IN AFRICA EVERY DAY'

Luchtenstein and Hughes went out alone against the lions. In the wild Northern territory of South-West Africa a farmer named Malherbe and his thirteen-year-old son recently cornered

seven lions in a blind valley. They shot six between them. The seventh lion took refuge in a cave. Malherbe had lost a number of donkeys (favourite meat of the lion) and he did not wish to leave a single lion alive on his farm. So he sent his young son to a point just above the mouth of the cave, telling him to wait there with his rifle aimed downwards. Malherbe then showed himself near the cave entrance. The lion rushed out, there was a shot from above, and the last lion paid the penalty for the raid on the donkeys. Those youngsters in South-West Africa can shoot.

In many parts of Africa the movements of lions are freakish in the extreme. They will disappear for months or years, then carry out a sudden raid on human beings or animals.

A true story is told of a young British officer who had just joined a regiment in Northern Nigeria. As a new-comer to Africa, he was the victim of a little practical joking; and he responded so innocently that fresh pitfalls were always being prepared for him.

One night after dinner in the mess he was informed by the humorists that a lion was prowling about the parade-ground.

"You have not got your first lion yet - here's your chance," they pointed out.

The young officer shot a lion that night in a place where no lions had been seen for many years. That ended the jokes at his expense.

Similarly, the behaviour of a lion when face to face with human beings can never be predicted safely. Only one thing is fairly certain; you must stand your ground, resist the temptation to run; for a lion that sees a man in flight may behave like a dog and give chase.

I know one man in Northern Rhodesia who found his courage failing, and decided to saunter casually away. The lion followed at the same slow pace. My friend, inspired by the emergency, drew a box of matches from his pocket and set fire to the dry grass. Lions dread fire, and he escaped.

Nevertheless, a hungry man-eater-a lion with worn teeth, too old to kill much game - will disobey all the rules and terrorize a district. Then

even the white settlers bar their windows, and thorn bomas are built round every native hut.

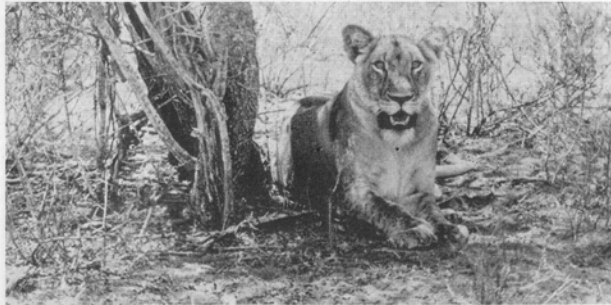
It was a man-eater that conquered its fear of brilliant light and jumped through the window of a house in Northern Rhodesia where a farmer lay reading in bed with a paraffin lamp beside him. The lamp fell over in the turmoil and went out; but the man, with remarkable presence of mind, flung his bedclothes over the lion. He escaped into another room and slammed the door before the lion emerged from the blankets.

A full-grown lioness was shot inside the compound of the medical research laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya, last year. Animals kept there for experimental purposes had been uneasy for several nights, but no one had guessed the reason. Then a native attendant saw the lioness jump the railings, and frightened it away by flashing an electric torch. The next night two laboratory assistants kept watch with rifles. They got the lioness.

In the Zambesi valley many natives still live in huts built on poles. The platforms are high, for a hungry lion will jump like a cat after meat.

Selous recorded the loss of a native who was pulled off a platform twenty feet in height.

Natives in the Zambesi valley do not climb down at night. Early this year a native in that area was riding a bicycle down a bush pathway. The tribesmen found his hat, boots and the bicycle next day - nothing more. And the cyclist was the third human victim within three weeks.



S.A.R. & H. photo

A LIONESS ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN VELD

A man-eater in the Fort Jameson district of Northern Rhodesia not long ago stalked a native father, mother, and young daughter. The parents were killed, but the child was not attacked. Soon afterwards the same lion (recognized by the marks of broken claw on one of the fore-paws)

took a white man from beneath the mosquito net in a rest hut. Victim after victim was reported, until at last the governor of the colony offered a free elephant licence as a prize to any hunter who killed the lion. This was a reward worth having; a licence usually costs £40, and it entitles the hunter to shoot three elephants. The tusks may be worth from £100 to £150 - Many expeditions were organized, but in the end the lion was poisoned by the servants of the Hon. H.J. Goodhart, a planter. He received the licence.

There are great lion hunters among the Bechuanas, and when Khama ruled the tribe he always sent his soldiers, armed with spears and ancient muzzle-loaders, to finish off a man-eater. Khama himself, according to tribal legend, once killed a lion with his bare hands. It was this encounter, his people say, which gave him his royal character and strength. After a successful lion hunt the Bechuanas eat the meat of the lion to make them brave and strong. The most nervous tribesmen are given the heart, for it is felt that they need this magic portion most.

I do not know whether any man has ever been able to throttle a lion, but every South-African remembers the struggle between a ranger named Wolhuter and a lion in the Kruger National Park. One lion attacked the horse, Wolhuter was riding. Wolhuter was unseated, and fell right into the jaws of a second lion. He was picked up by the right shoulder and dragged away over rough ground for nearly a hundred yards.

Then Wolhuter remembered his sheath knife. He could only use his left hand, so he decided to wait for a better chance and pretended to be dead.

Presently the lion stopped to rest and released Wolhuter's shoulder. The next moment Wolhuter stabbed the lion desperately - twice in the side, once in the throat. He stood up, shouting at the lion, and saw it retreat. With the last of his failing strength he climbed a tree and tied himself to a branch with his handkerchief. There his native servants found him, and a dead lion not far away. Wolhuter spent weeks in hospital before he could return to duty.

Natives, too, have displayed great courage in the presence of lions. A native woman in Northern Rhodesia saw her baby seized by a lion. She dashed at the lion, tore at its whiskers, recovered the baby - and produced the mangy hairs as proof of the encounter!

I met a Bushman, fearfully scarred, in the Kalahari desert. He had been pinned down by a lion, and escaped by throwing sand into the lion's eyes.

A Muhimba woman in East Africa heard a noise in the cattle kraal at night. Finding a lion among the goats, she went in with a spear and killed the invader. Native children have been known to throw stones at lions - an amusement I have never felt tempted to imitate.

Strangest of all lion stories in recent months, I think, was the sequel to an adventure of several years ago. In August 1935, Clifford Simpson of Lothair (near the Swaziland border) wounded a lioness and was severely mauled. During the struggle he managed to fire his rifle and kill the lioness. He was then attacked by the mate, a lion with a black mane. The lion smashed his rifle

and sank its teeth in Simpson's hip. Simpson, game to the last, struck the lion repeatedly on the head with the broken rifle. The lion slunk away. Mrs. Simpson dressed her husband's wounds and drove him for more than a hundred miles to the nearest hospital. He had forty distinct lacerations, but he recovered. Meanwhile, a number of people had visited the scene of the encounter and noted that the lion had left an unusual spoor revealing a malformation of one foot-pad.

In July last year Simpson, bitten but not shy, killed a black-maned lion close to the spot where he had been mauled. The marking of the foot-pad was unmistakable. The hunter had the last laugh.

How much longer these attacks and counter-attacks will last I cannot predict. But I think the lions of Africa will still be making news at the end of the century.

II

After centuries of shooting in South-Africa the great wild animals still survive in vast herds - and still claim victims among the hunters.

Major J.J. Bosman, one of the most experienced big-game shots in the Transvaal, has just died after being tossed and mauled by a buffalo. Only last year he secured a buffalo bull with the greatest spread of horns on record - 561 inches. Now Major Bosman has shared the fate of some of the most famous African hunters of different periods. A bull in a Spanish arena is a contemptible little beast in comparison with an angry buffalo in the African bush.

Several authorities place the buffalo at the top of the list of Africa's dangerous animals from the hunter's point of view. Selous put the lion first, and bracketed the elephant and buffalo next. It really depends on the type of country and the hunting conditions - there can never be a fixed rule. As a rule, no animal is dangerous until it is provoked. (This is a rule with exceptions.) The traveller in Africa will be extremely unlucky if he is attacked before he has wounded a lion, elephant or buffalo. The question really is this - which is the most dangerous wounded animal?

More hunters are killed by lions than by any other wild beast; the septic teeth and claws help

to increase the death-roll. A charging elephant is an unpleasant sight, but it must be remembered that the elephant's eyesight and hearing are poor. The buffalo, however, has revealed certain qualities and habits which make old hunters doubly cautious when they follow the buffalo trail.

Let us look closer at this cunning adversary. There are two main groups in Africa, the large, jet-black type which I have seen grazing by the score in Bechuanaland, and the smaller red and brown buffalo of the Congo and West Africa. The distribution is so wide that buffalo are easier to find in Africa than any other large animal; they roam over more than half the continent. You may encounter them in coastal swamps and, 10,000 feet up on mountain slopes. It is the simplest of all spoors to follow. But you will see buffalo in the open only in remote areas. They have learnt to take cover, and therein lies the great danger of buffalo hunting.

Old hunters seldom take a chance with a buffalo. They wait until the huge black shape, with nostrils uplifted, approaches within about

twenty paces. The 'armoured' head will not often be pierced by a bullet; a well-aimed shoulder shot is best.

As the hunter fires, he knows that he is running the risk of infuriating a creature which can be stopped, while charging, only by death. Wound after wound will not halt an angry buffalo.

The shot gives the hunter's presence away, for the buffalo has keen eyesight, good scent and hearing; and after the shot, the hunter must kill or be mauled.

Sometimes a hunter may save himself by clambering into a tree. But it must be a strong tree, or the cunning buffalo will use its head as a battering ram and shake its victim out of the branches.

Once I met, as a fellow-passenger from India to East Africa, a woman who specialized in capturing and transporting wild animals to the zoos of the world. She was Mrs. C. Schulz, well known in the Union; and her husband, who is in the same trade, was once treed by a buffalo.

Helpless without a rifle, Mr. Schulz was forced to watch his partner being gored to death below. Mr. Schulz made several attempts to climb down and reach his rifle; but each time the buffalo left its victim and waited for him.

A lion will often leave its prey, unaccountably. The buffalo is vindictive and merciless, long after the victim is dead.

Another hunter who found refuge in a tree made a number of attempts to hook up his rifle, using long branches. He, too, was alarmed to find that the buffalo came snorting to the foot of the tree whenever he climbed down from his perch. It was a long and uncomfortable wait.

I was once in the Kalahari with a well-known hunter and desert guide, Mr. Donald Bain of Cape Town - a man who can claim the most remarkable escape from a buffalo ever recorded. Mr. Bain is 6 feet 4 inches in height and weighs 236 lb. "I felt like a sawdust doll when that buffalo tackled me," he declared.

He was leading an expedition in Northern Bechuanaland when the encounter occurred. Mr. Bain was in camp one day, attending to the

trophies, when he received a note from his companions: "We are following up a wounded buffalo, but he has gone into thick bush. Please bring the dogs. Urgent."

With only a walking-stick in his hand, Mr. Bain set out with the dogs. Suddenly he heard a crackling noise. He looked round and saw a great bull buffalo lumbering towards him.

"I raced for the nearest tree," Mr. Bain told me. "The buffalo, close behind, missed me and gashed the bark of the tree-trunk. It chased me three times round that tree, then swirled round. I saved myself, with a tremendous effort, from falling over the horns. Next moment I was running desperately towards a high ant-heap.

"But now the buffalo was gaining on me. I felt an agonizing impact, and then I was in the air.

"Never for a moment did I lose consciousness. The buffalo tried to kneel on me. I wriggled and rolled, twisted, kicked, and fought. After a time my legs became useless. At last I lay winded and unable to move. The

buffalo smelt me from the boots upwards, then lowered its head for the last charge.

"My companions arrived at that moment, having heard the bellowing and grunting. 'Shoot,' I yelled. One shot killed the buffalo.

"I was seriously bruised, with a few flesh wounds. I had a black eye, loose teeth, a cracked jaw-bone, and a dislocated knee. But not a bone was broken. Days afterwards I was carried into the Victoria Falls Hotel, full of gratitude for the way my companions had tried to relieve my sufferings."

The wounded buffalo will go in a circle and attack the hunter from the rear. It is a menace to human beings, and in places a destroyer of crops. No licence is needed, in many territories, for hunting buffalo. At one time it was a paying game for the professional hunter, with traders paying £10 apiece for buffalo hides. The natives in Uganda kill buffalo with spears; and in West Africa natives take pot-shots, at the risk of their lives, with muzzle-loaders. But the white hunter will choose his heaviest rifle, and take careful aim.

Lions attack buffaloes, but only in organized hunts. A single lion which ventured on a duel with a buffalo would probably be left mangled on the veld. In a battle with a crocodile, however, a buffalo has been defeated and dragged under water.

Africa knows few louder noises than the tumult caused by a stampeding, bellowing herd of buffalo. The earth shakes under their hoof-beats. They can jump like horses. Dust like a smoke-screen marks their sensational departure.

III

When will the governments of Africa declare war on the crocodile?

This sinister creature of all the tropical rivers is without a friend. I have sniped the wicked crocodile from many a launch and paddle-steamer, scoring few hits but feeling no regrets. The crimes of the crocodile are legion, its victims far more numerous than those of the lion or any other man-eater. Yet the toll of human life goes on year after year.

There are so many crocodiles that the task of extermination seems, at first sight, almost hopeless. Before the war the Germans in East Africa once offered £1 for every crocodile destroyed. White hunters formed a syndicate. They employed large gangs of natives, and diverted the course of a river to expose the crocodiles. Hundreds were killed. The syndicate paid handsome dividends for a time, until the colonial government became alarmed at the expense and withdrew the rewards.

Uganda in recent years has tackled the menace more skilfully. Natives are employed to discover and break the eggs. In one year four thousand eggs were destroyed. This was great work for posterity, though it may be discouraging to point out that if every egg in Africa could be smashed the crocodiles would not become extinct in our time. A crocodile lives for a century or more.

In the French Congo and other territories black convicts are chained lightly neck to neck. Ten convicts were set to work on the bank of a river passing buckets of water from

hand to hand. One crocodile pulled the whole gang of ten men into the river and drowned them all. The last man was disappearing when the armed guard looked round.

Usually the unsuspecting woman filling her water jar is flicked by the crocodile's tail, seized in the jaws, and carried away - often with a baby on her back. And this is no rare tragedy. Many observers believe that thousands of African natives go to their deaths in that grim manner every year. In India snakes do most of the killing. In Africa the crocodile is the great unconquered scourge.

The women of many tribes wear beads. Marcus Daly, the well-known hunter, once shot a crocodile with beads weighing 20 lb. in the stomach. Those beads meant that one crocodile must have accounted for at least forty girls.

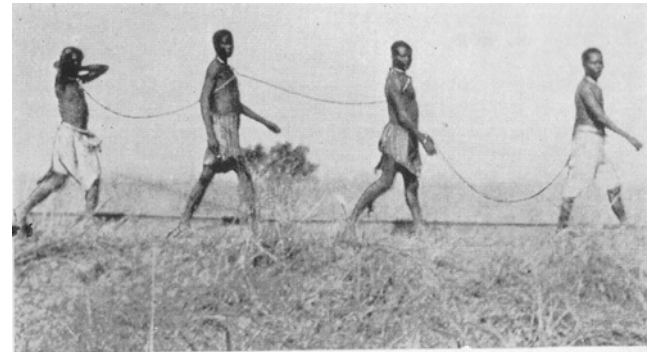
Much stranger finds have been made in the stomachs of crocodiles. In February 1939 a crocodile shot in the Gwanda River, Southern Rhodesia, revealed a Kruger sovereign, six rough diamonds, and a pair of bangles. Some native

returning home from the mines at Kimberley must have been the victim.

A richer hoard was gathered by a hunter named Develing from a crocodile he killed in the Komati River in the Transvaal years ago. The stomach contained stones, antelope remains, and twenty-five golden sovereigns. Some of the coins had become worn as a result of contact with the stones; but the heads of Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, and President Kruger could be seen. The newest sovereign was dated 1909. These slender clues gave little hope of tracing the victim.

Unfortunately, the natives regard such tragedies as something imposed on them by fate. They will not take precautions. Many a tribe has its sacred crocodiles, into which the souls of dead human beings are said to pass. There is a lonely lake in Northern Nigeria where crocodiles must have been placed by human agency in the dim past. About twenty years ago two white hunters arrived on the scene and blazed away at the loathsome crocodiles. These two men were massacred by the tribesmen. An official notice-

board to-day warns visitors against shooting. It is still difficult to persuade the chief that photography will not harm the creatures of the lake.



CONVICTS, CHAINED LIGHTLY NECK TO NECK, IN THE
BELGIAN CONGO

Before Northern Nigeria came under British protection there were many human sacrifices made in that lake when crops failed. Now a cow must suffice.

Elsewhere in Africa crocodiles have been observed in crater lakes on mountain summits thousands of feet above sea-level. It is clear that the ancestors of these crocodiles were

taken there for worship as the deities of stupid tribes. Even the ancient Egyptians venerated the crocodile. While such an attitude persists among the natives of Africa there is little hope of removing the danger.

The ubiquitous crocodile survives in spite of the demand for crocodile skin and the complete absence of restrictions on shooting. I believe this is largely due to the fact that natives have not yet learnt to prepare the valuable skins properly for export. The skins are dried instead of salted, thus becoming almost useless as articles of commerce. Other beautiful and harmless African animals have been wiped out for profit. It is tragic indeed that the ugly crocodile should remain when the quagga has vanished and many species of antelope have become rare.

Fortunately, not all crocodiles are sacred, and the tribes which eat crocodile meat (hardly an appetizing dish!) show wonderful ingenuity in their methods of hunting. Sometimes this ingenuity conflicts with European ideas. Two white travellers in a remote stretch of West

Africa once watched the ghastly spectacle of a number of babies being set out at regular intervals along a muddy river bank. The babies were acting as bait for the crocodiles! When the travellers protested they were assured that everything would be all right. The crocodiles appeared, spears flashed in the sunlight, crocodile after crocodile was struck in the eyes, open jaws, or in the tender spot at the base of the head where the spine may be severed. Not a baby was lost that day.

Few people have escaped from a crocodile's jaws. The shock is so paralysing that only the most determined character will emerge from the ordeal. One remarkable escape, however, is still discussed in West Africa. The wife of a white official was bathing in a shallow backwater which appeared to be safe. She was seized by a crocodile and dragged towards deeper water. This desperate woman, finding one leg free, kicked out so vigorously at the crocodile's eyes that she was released. Prompt attention in hospital saved her life.

A native in a Northern Transvaal river was taken by a crocodile to its lair in a hole beneath the bank. He was unable to struggle and was half-dead from suffocation and fright when the killer deposited him above the water-level in the dark cave and left him there. (This is the crocodile's normal procedure, for it seldom feeds immediately.) The native lay there, slowly recovering, and saw a gleam of light. He crawled painfully up the cave, reached the surface, and shouted for help. He is proud of the teeth-scars that he displays on his chest when he tells the story of his resurrection.

Another native was washing clothes in the Lundi River, Southern Rhodesia, when he felt his arm being seized by a crocodile. He had the presence of mind to ram his hat down the crocodile's throat. The crocodile paused, opened its jaws to secure a fresh grip, and snatched at the native's leg. The man was powerfully built and he wrenched himself away, losing a certain amount of flesh in the process. Others heard his shouts and took him to hospital in time for the doctors to save his leg.

There is little humour in these attacks by crocodiles, but the story told by an old native in Uganda had its lighter side. The man presented himself before the game warden and explained that he had been sitting close to a river when a crocodile had come up and tried to seize him.

"I jumped out of the way, and the crocodile took my cooking-pot," declared the old man with an air of grievance.

"That was lucky for you. What do you want me to do?" inquired the game warden.

"I shall need a new cooking-pot," replied the old man resentfully. "The Government should give me one."

'Lutembe,' the famous sacred crocodile of Lake Victoria, Uganda, still answers the call of her keepers and tamely drags herself on shore to be fed. Not long ago a careless native held out a lump of fish in his hand instead of dangling it from a stick. Lutembe, a coarse eater, shut her jaws on the fish and the man's arm as well. She realized the mistake in time and let the unhappy native go free.

If the tribal legend is to be believed Lutembe is now more than three centuries old. Before the white man came to Uganda Lutembe was the chief's executioner, and many a condemned prisoner did she swallow. Now she is simply a fish-eating attraction for tourists.

The widespread African custom of trial by ordeal is not dead yet. In the uncivilized areas of the Gameroons a crocodile pool is used to extract the truth from witnesses. A man who has given evidence truthfully in a dispute will swim across the pool without fear of death in a crocodile's jaws. The liar (according to the tribesmen) will not face the ordeal. If he does he will surely be seized.

Crocodiles in Africa do not approach the lengths of the huge crocodiles in India. The record African size, however, is still a matter for debate. Some of the most experienced hunters declare they will not accept anything beyond 17 feet until they see it. A crocodile shot in the Limpopo a few years ago, 15-21 feet long, may be regarded as the present well-

authenticated record. A French magistrate at Lake Chad is reported to have measured a crocodile 29 feet in length, but the London Zoo authorities have no mention of this monster in their archives.

After a certain age the crocodile increases in girth but not in length. The weight becomes impressive with the years; one wonders how the puny legs can support a bulk of about 2 tons. Yet it is unwise to misjudge the speed of the ungainly crocodile when there is a victim to be caught.

One item of food which the crocodile likes, but seldom tastes, is the monkey. The spectacle of a band of chattering monkeys in the trees mocking the crocodiles in the water beneath has been noted with satisfaction by many travellers.

A large battered crocodile skeleton was once found in a tree 14 feet from the ground, and so far from any habitation that it was obvious that no human beings had placed it there. The probable explanation was that the foolish crocodile had gripped the trunk of an

elephant drinking from the river. The infuriated elephant had stamped the crocodile to death and flung it into the branches.

Somewhere there is a treasured photograph of a crocodile seizing a full-grown rhinoceros by the hind leg. After a gigantic struggle the rhino was hauled into the water and drowned.

Crocodiles do not attack full-grown hippo, but a baby hippo is in constant danger. For this reason mother hippos are often seen floating down the rivers with their young on their backs for greater safety.

For sheer natural drama the duel watched by the ship's company of H.M.S. *Bridgewater* in the harbour of Diego Suarez, Madagascar, in 1937, could hardly be excelled. The river running into the bay had brought down a crocodile. A few moments after sighting the crocodile, the seamen saw the water hurled into the air and stained with blood. When the fin of a shark appeared, they realised that a great fight was in progress. A motor launch went off, and the crocodile, with its tail bitten off, was roped and hoisted on board

ship. It was only a 6 foot crocodile, or the result might have been different.

Dynamite, traps, shark hooks and lassoes have all been used against the hated crocodile, and with some success. But a much more intensive campaign will have to be organized before the crocodile ceases to be the 'undertaker of Africa.' I know a man in Natal who has shot hundreds of crocodiles with an old Martini. He still finds the game thrilling. "I am not robbing Africa of something that will never return," he told me. "I am ridding the rivers of a pest."

Professional big-game hunters are scarce in Africa nowadays, but the professional snake hunter is finding more work than ever before.

I was reminded the other day of these scores of men, earning money at the risk of their lives, by the, ghastly ordeal of the Breda family. Mr. Stoffel Breda is a snake collector in the Transvaal, and he takes his wife and six children on some of his expeditions. They were all asleep in their tent recently when the children awoke and shrieked in terror.

Mr. Breda found that a box containing the day's haul of live and deadly snakes had broken open. Adders, ringhals, and cobras were writhing among the children's blankets. The whole family abandoned the tent before anyone had been bitten, and spent the rest of the night round the camp fire. When daylight came all the snakes had escaped.

Probably the most daring of the band of snake hunters is Mr. G.M.S. Wassenaar, who catches even the dreaded mamba with his bare hands. The mamba is the fastest-moving snake in Africa, the only snake that will pursue a victim; and its bite is usually fatal within a few hours. Two drops of the venom will kill a bullock. Yet Mr. Wassenaar, working without gloves, seizes his snakes by their tails and drops them into the bag. He sends his specimens to laboratories and snake parks. "The snakes will get me some day - but not yet," he declares.

Snakes are being caught from the Namib desert dunes all the way across to the Zambesi mouth, up and down South-Africa from Cape

Town to the swamps of Northern Rhodesia. The ruling price for pythons is about 2s. 6d. a foot, and they are used for women's shoes and handbags. Venom is a specialized side-line. It is used, of course, for the preparation of serum, and may be worth as much as £50 an ounce. Drop by drop the collector earns his pay. One man told me that he took eight chances of death for every sovereign he received.

Those who wish to enter the snake-collecting profession should first study the experience of Mr. R. M. Isemonger, a Natal collector. He flashed his electric torch into a snake hole one night and was instantly bitten in the index finger by a small mamba.

The fang punctures began to sting painfully, and soon the whole arm was throbbing. Mr. Isemonger's companion tied a tight ligature above the elbow and they set off for the nearest hospital. The typical drowsiness followed.

Anti-venom serum applied early would have brought quick relief. Mr. Isemonger, however, remained between life and death for days. Five months of illness followed, the inflamed finger

giving constant trouble. More than six months passed before Mr. Isemonger could return to his dangerous work.

Snake venoms are now being used, not only in the treatment of snake-bite, but as remedies for such serious conditions as epilepsy, arthritis, asthma, and excessive bleeding. Cobra and other venoms are injected in minute doses; and though these methods have not yet been developed to the point where cures are claimed, there is no doubt that much relief from pain is obtained. Research workers are extending the uses of snake venoms every year.

Like many other medical discoveries, snake venom as a remedy was found by chance. Actually it was a poisonous spider that bit a leper and set the doctors off along a new trail. The leper's condition appeared to improve. Physicians at the Pasteur Institute in Paris decided to try the effect of snake venoms, and a long series of experiments led to a degree of success.

Venoms of a certain group have the effect of clotting the blood. This is exactly what is wanted for haemophilia, the hereditary disease from

which many persons of royal blood, and others less exalted, suffer. A diluted solution of viper's venom stops this excessive bleeding most efficiently.

Thus modern medicine follows on the lines created by African witch doctors centuries ago. Snakes and portions of snakes play a large part in African magic, and many a witch-doctor has died collecting his 'materia medica.' One of the most recent victims was a daring Xosa medicine man who was in the habit of collecting a crowd round him and gathering what fees he could. He then gave value for money by biting the head off a living snake. He attempted the feat too often.

Tragic indeed was the belief of a young Englishman who came to South-Africa for his health. three years ago. He was suffering from tuberculosis, and he told his friends that snake venom would cure him. One day he picked up a ringhals and allowed it to strike his arm repeatedly.

"You see - I am quite all right," remarked the young man calmly. " My faith will cure me." Soon afterwards the poison began to take effect,

but he refused treatment. His last conscious act was to sign a statement exonerating the doctor in attendance from all responsibility. Within a few hours he was dead.

Nevertheless, snakes are treated with respect in Africa, and the fatalities are insignificant compared with the yearly death-roll of thirty thousand in India. The African native walks warily in the bush. Proud Zulus, men who have hunted lions with spears, will run from a snake.

Imagination, which contributes so much to the fear of the snake, also assists in the cure of snake bite. (For a bite, even when no serum is available, is not necessarily fatal.) The old, unscientific remedy in South-Africa is the 'snake stone,' a slightly porous black stone, treasured by all who own them. This stone is popularly credited with the power to draw out poison. Even the late Captain E.C. Selous believed in the stone and recorded that an old Boer friend possessed one 'that had saved the lives of many people and horses, and for which he had refused an offer of £50. The snake stone has been tested by scientists both in South-Africa and in India, and

found to have no effect one way or the other. The true believer, however, may strengthen his resistance to the poison by using the stone.

Escapes from snakes will always outnumber the fatalities. One of the luckiest ever reported was that of a Rhodesian who went out shooting with an orange in his pocket. A mamba killed the dogs and then struck out at the man. The venom was found in the orange.

Finally there was the forestry official, far from medical help, who was bitten by a snake. He drew his revolver, shot the snake, then shot off the injured finger. For some time he preserved both the snake and the finger in bottles as proof of his truly remarkable tale. Anti-climax was brought about one day by the naturalist who pointed out that the snake was not of a poisonous species.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

TRAILS OF THE TUSKERS

I

One night in South-West Africa I saw the fury of the elephants. Just an hour before I had watched a lion cross the track, stare at the headlights of the car, then pass on proudly into the dark. The sight of that lion inspired far less alarm than the havoc of the elephants. It was near the lonely police outpost of Okaukeweyo in the Northern territory, and about 50 miles from the farming centre of Outjo. During the German occupation, there was a fort at Okaukeweyo and a large garrison. Today a sergeant of the South-West African Police lives there with his wife. I asked the sergeant whether it would be safe to follow the trail down to Outjo at night with elephants about.

The sergeant pondered for a few moments. "I think it should be all right," he said. "Just sound your hooter if you see them - that may clear the road for you."

I had never travelled that way before, and the presence of elephants did not alarm me. But my companions had driven over the route the previous week. They had seen the elephants uprooting trees, and heard them trumpeting. They declared that if I had been with them, I would wish to follow their suggestion - which was to sleep at Okaukeweyo.

But I had not encountered the menace. I made light of elephants, and pointed out that there was a good German hotel at Outjo, with soft beds and baths. We had been camping on the cold veld, and the beds settled the problem. On to Outjo, with the sergeant raising a khaki arm in farewell and wishing us luck with the elephants.

"No chance of losing our way to-night, with a telephone line to guide us," I reminded my companions cheerfully.

"There's your telephone line," they answered grimly. The driver flashed a torch to the side of the road, and I saw wooden pole after pole, uprooted and splintered, lying in the grass.

"The elephants did that," they said. "We met a post office man in Outjo. He told us they are not

going to bother about repairing the line to Okaukeweyo. Too expensive. Every time they laid it the elephants tore it down."

Then there was a camp, with huge fires blazing. A native came running out. "Be careful, masters-elephants," he warned.

"Are they near here?" I asked.

"Not far. The wild Bushmen saw them to-day and told us."

A few miles beyond a small tree barred the track, obviously uprooted by the elephants. Fortunately it was not too heavy for us to drag aside. Then for miles the track was littered with branches and the huge droppings of the elephants. We had now returned to a farming area, in a district which is remote, but which has been settled for 30 years. It was strange to find traces of untamed elephants so close to notice boards and road signs.

Just on the fringe of Outjo the driver pulled up hurriedly. Two gemsbok and two kudu blundered into the lights, remained dazzled for a moment, then stampeded into the bush. But the elephants

were safely behind us, slaking their thirst in some farmer's dam.

In Outjo next day I heard stories of the elephants. Every dry season, it appears, a bold herd comes down from the Kaokoveld to the edge of civilisation. (The Kaokoveld is the great forbidden territory to the South of the Kunene River, where only the police may go.) For years the outlying farmers have suffered from raids by these elephants. Lions, leopards, and jackals cause no complaints, for they are shot at sight. But the elephants rank as 'royal game.'

Herds of sheep have been attacked by these vicious elephants. Fences and windmills have been battered down, and reservoirs damaged. Gardens have been stamped flat. When the thirsty elephants smell water they destroy everything in their path.

One farmer, Mr. E. Kiekebusch, was swimming in a pool near his house when he saw the trunk of an elephant reaching out into the water for him. Outjo farmers keep their rifles handy. Mr. Kiekebusch swam to the far side of the pool, seized his gun, and fired five shots. The

elephant staggered away and dropped dead. On that occasion the authorities were compelled to overlook the shooting for Mr. Kiekebusch had fired in self-defence.

I met a police sergeant who found himself, not long ago, trapped in a ravine in the Kaokoveld with elephants bellowing round him and preparing to charge. It was during one of those rare years when the dry watercourse's of the Kaokoveld were carrying torrents to the sea. The elephants screamed. Without hesitation the sergeant forced his terrified horse over the bank into the flood and emerged safely on the far side.

At one time elephants roamed over wide stretches of South-West Africa. Lawless traders and hunters travelled by wagon into the interior, and set up a regular ivory market at Walvis Bay. Nowadays the last large herds are confined to the unmapped Kaokoveld.

Ivory poachers are not unknown in that territory. They slip over the border from Angola, where elephant hunting is permitted and tusks are still sold. In Windhoek once I talked to a poacher who had been captured by a native

chief. The chief sent a message to the police, the poacher was escorted south for trial and fined £50.

There are at least five hundred, and possibly a thousand elephants in the Kaokoveld. Huge footprints are seen for miles round every water-hole, and a herd moving along the sky-line looks like an express train.

The elephants feed on the leaves of the mopani trees. Raids on native gardens provide a change of diet. Once the sun goes down no native will linger near a water-hole. They have a sort of understanding with the elephants - human beings draw water by day, elephants at night. It is interesting to note that the elephants will not even share their water with other great beasts. A water-hole is known to the natives as a 'rhino spring' or an 'elephant spring.' The animals always drink apart, even though they must cover long distances.

Donald Bain, the well-known South-African hunter and friend of the Bushmen, told me that he once camped near a water-hole in the Kaokoveld. Camp had been pitched in the

darkness, and Bain had not noticed that the tents stood between two elephant paths.

After dinner Bain went to his stretcher while his camp servant, Frederick, made bread. The dough was left to ripen overnight, wrapped in blankets near the tents.

Just after midnight Bain was roused by the loud barking of dogs and the vicious trumpeting of an elephant. He sat up and saw 'a mountain on legs' coming towards him.

"Instinctively I rolled over," said Bain. "I expected to be crushed. For a few seconds there was confusion. Dogs yelped, the natives shouted in terror, and the elephant did its best to out-bellow us all. It caught its legs in the guy-ropes, flattening out the tent, and put one of its huge feet into Frederick's dough. Frederick had his face well plastered."

Mercifully, the elephant passed on, crashing away through the undergrowth. Donald Bain will not camp near an elephant path again.

II

There is good news of the Knysna elephant herd - the last isolated herd of giant tuskers south of the Zambesi, and probably the largest elephants in the world. It is remarkable that elephants should survive at all so close to civilization near the southern tip of Africa.

For years the herd has been regarded as facing extinction. Wood-cutters have declared there is only one cow-elephant among the survivors. Now the spoor, only 3 inches in diameter, of a newly-born calf has been identified. If the calf happens to be a female the herd may escape the fate of those vast legions of elephants that once went trumpeting beneath the stinkwood trees.

These Knysna elephants are twice the size of dwarf elephants found not far away in the Addo bush. A specimen shot by Major Pretorius some years ago (now in the Cape Town Museum) stands 12 feet 6 inches high and 22 feet 3 inches long. This record bull supports the theory that the Knysna elephants are the greatest of their race.

Even the people of the forests seldom see the herd. A ranger, for example, told me that he had caught glimpses of them only twice in fourteen years. No one can say exactly how many there are. The leader is known to be an enormous old bull. Seven were seen near a forest station last year, and there may be a dozen, or even fourteen, in the herd today.

Wood-cutters assured me that the herd makes pilgrimage every year from their favourite haunt at Oubrand to a clearing near the Deepwalls forest station. They say this trek may be timed almost to the same night each year, and that the elephants cross the road at the same place - the thirteenth milestone - on each occasion. After a couple of days spent mysteriously in the clearing they return to Oubrand.

At other times the elephants are heard rooting noisily in the undergrowth, but few people ever see them. Baboons keep them company. When a man approaches the elephants go swaying off blindly, crashing through the bush, urging the calves along, and breaking down the young trees in their path.

The plantations suffer, even from this small herd. Elephants like tasty roots. They make a mass attack, like a battering-ram, on a tree which is too strong for one elephant to uproot alone. A forest official once showed me a fire-belt of young Blackwood trees, valued at £200, torn down by the herd. These Knysna elephants seem to hate the works of man. They have hurled wagons off the forest tracks, scattered loose stone beacons, destroyed gates.

Few deaths, however, can be traced to the herd. Some years ago a wood-cutter asleep in the forest failed to awake when a dog gave the alarm. The man's companions escaped; but the wood-cutter remained in the path of a bull elephant and was crushed to death.

As a result of other narrow escapes, wood-cutters working near Oubrand now take precautions. Rope-ladders are lashed to trees, and on several occasions wood-cutters have been forced to find safety in the heights.

False alarms are raised, too. A favourite practical joke, of which the wood-cutters never tire, is arranged by one of the party creeping

away from camp at night. He rolls a log towards his companions and imitates the elephant call by blowing into a tin. The victim, certain that an elephant is charging, climbs a tree and is jeered at by his friends.

Years ago, when the herd was larger, a daring band of Knysna wood-cutters became ivory poachers. They smuggled the tusks away under loads of timber in ox-wagons fitted with false bottoms. Elephant hunting was still permitted in the Northern Transvaal - at that period, and there the poachers sold the tusks.

It is not often that a dead elephant is found anywhere in Africa. Last year, however, a young bull elephant was found dead by a wood-cutter. Officials examined the carcass to establish the cause of death, and formed the theory that the youngster had been trampled to death accidentally during a battle between two veterans of the herd.

It is said that the Knysna elephants go pounding across country, at intervals of many years, to visit their dwarf cousins in the Addo Bush. No such stampede, however, has been observed in

recent times. The Knysna giants have little in common with the stunted Addo elephants.

III

"Five elephants are joining us," called the chief officer, passing rapidly aft. "Come along and see the fun."

The ship was lying in the little harbour of Madras, bound for East African ports and Cape Town, and the elephants, I learnt, were consigned to Mombasa. It seemed strange to take elephants to Africa. Soon I was to meet Mrs. C. Schultz, owner of the elephants, and hear the story of the wildest trade that ever a woman entered.

Meanwhile Mrs. Schultz, a fair, well-built German, was shouting orders to the thin-legged Madras coolies who were preparing the slings on the wharf. Trained elephants are usually led up the gangway; but these were newly captured elephants, ready to bolt for it.

So a large canvas sling was placed beneath each quivering stomach. The crane gently took the weight. Immediately each startled elephant set up a piteous squealing which grew in volume as

the sling lifted it into mid-air, and ceased only when it reached the deck. Trunks and feet lashed out, ears flapped, wicked little eyes rolled malevolently. It was a relief to everyone when the last elephant went over the rail.

That evening, while the ship was steering south for Colombo, I found Mrs. Schultz thrusting bottle after bottle of milk down each elephantine throat. One Chinese carpenter, a grey-haired *serang* with round black cap, lascars in blue dungarees, deck passengers lolling on their sleeping-mats-all watched the vigorous Mrs. Schultz feeding, smacking, and comforting the elephants.

But the most fascinated spectators of all were two rare monkeys. They clasped each other fearfully, cowered and peered round a ventilator at the snorting giants. Sometimes they forgot their common fear and went into desperate clinches with fangs bared. "Vonce a monkee all-vays a monkee," observed Mrs. Schultz indulgently. "Mister Silva - der monkees go now back to der cage!"

Mr. Silva, a dark Portuguese Indian assistant, was given fifty tasks. He must tidy the bundles of hay and leaves, bring stacks of purple sugar-cane, prepare balls of cooked rice to follow the milk into the mouths of the elephants.

"Mister Silva!" The cry rang through the ship. "Mister Silva! It is here too hot for elephant. I speak first officier. Too hot. Elephant not like heat."

Always the elephants strained at their chains. Always the terrified monkeys made the elephants nervous with their antics-elephants dislike small creatures and may become panic-stricken at the sight of mice.

These were small elephants, the eldest not more than thirteen months old. Small animals (said Mrs. Schultz) were now in demand by zoos in all parts of the world. Mrs. Schultz thought of the world in terms of animals. Abyssinia, where she had travelled with an escort of soldiers, meant lions. Madagascar - 'joost monkees.' The Belgian Congo, okapi and gorillas. She had been in many lonely

corners of Africa with her husband, shooting and collecting. When her husband fell ill she had gone to India alone to secure elephants. It was an idea of her own. In the Congo she had seen the Belgians training African elephants - an experiment attempted only in recent years. Formerly it was believed that the African elephant would not work. Mrs. Schultz decided to import Indian elephants to set a good example to the captive African tuskiers on her husband's ranch at Arusha, Tanganyika. They had cost her heavy freight on the Indian railways and £8 apiece for the run to Mombasa. But she was a determined woman. She told me that twenty giraffes would have given her less trouble than those five elephants. She worked all through the sweltering days to keep them comfortable on their shaded deck outside the ship's laundry. Mr. Silva worked too. And she saw them all safely into railway trucks at Mombasa. The ship seemed empty after their noisy departure.

Officers I questioned all confirmed Mrs. Schultz's view of the temperamental elephant. I

heard the tale of three elephants shipped from Rangoon to the timber forests of the Andaman Islands, the convict settlement in the Bay of Bengal. The contract stipulated that the elephants should be towed on shore with their legs secured. One elephant broke loose, plunged into the sea, reached the beach, and ran trumpeting into the forest. There was an argument with the tally clerk, who was finally persuaded to sign for 'three elephants - one in dispute.'

Pythons are often carried on board ship, and - by reason of their great strength usually manage to break out of their crates. When that happens the scared seamen prefer to feed the python with lumps of meat until it is so gorged that it cannot move. It is too much to ask a man to go down into the hold where an enormous snake lies waiting for prey.

A wildcat, a little spitfire from 'Nest Africa, once caused panic on board a liner when it escaped from its cage. It raced like an arrow along corridors, leapt down stairways with flaming eyes, and was cornered at last in a first-

class cabin. There it found refuge under a bunk, snarling, spitting and defying its pursuers. This occurred while the ship was putting to sea. The rolling of the ship accomplished more than the ship's company could have achieved. Gradually the wildcat quietened down, and when the seamen ventured inside the cabin the ferocious creature was as tame as a cat on a hearthrug.

Then there was the camel that smashed its way out of its stall on board ship in the Persian Gulf, shambled along the deck and went leering and kicking into the galley in search of food. The cook, a thin man, squeezed through a porthole.

All attempts to lure the camel out of the galley failed. A resourceful seaman who had once been a soldier in India arrived, however, and flung a bag skilfully over the camel's head. Then passing a rope round the neck, he led the camel out backwards. "Cover up his navigation lights and he goes astern, see," he explained. Lions stand a sea voyage well, and give no trouble. But there is a story told by seafarers of a lion that became annoyed by the foghorn in

narrow waters and echoed each blast with a deep-throated roar. This was all very well until the siren of another ship was heard close by. Then the lion's roar made it difficult to observe the code of signals by which ships in fog avoid collision. Fortunately there was no accident. If there had been a collision, the evidence at the court of inquiry would have been amusing.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TORTOISE AND GIRAFFE

I

New dangers threaten the tortoises of South-Africa. Hawks, dogs and prowling bands of coloured people seeking tasty food have always preyed on tortoises. Many tortoises have been destroyed in veld fires. But now the tortoise has become a fashionable pet in the United States and Britain, and an export trade has been organized.

Large leopard tortoises from South-Africa are being sold in London from £10 to £15 apiece,

while Cape geometric tortoises worth 12 guineas each in Hollywood are wallowing in the gardens of film stars with strange emblems painted on their backs.

"Steps are being taken to prevent the wholesale slaughter and export of tortoises," Dr. Leonard Gill, of the South-African Museum, told me recently. "The Museum Association is at work, the provincial authorities have been approached, and I am sure that no export trade on a large scale will be allowed. At the moment, however, a permit to export tortoises is unnecessary."

The Malmesbury Town Council has already put forward a plea for the establishment of a tortoise reserve as a means of saving the species.

Young tortoises hatch out after fourteen months in the eggs. Their chief enemies are the hawks that carry them aloft and drop them from great heights to feast on the shattered remains.

The human tortoise-eaters declare that the flesh is more enjoyable than chicken, and has valuable medical properties as a result of the tortoise's diet of herbs. Many white farmers

have an occasional baked tortoise on the table, while one 'hunting party' will leave the shells of forty tortoises round their camp fire on the veld. Tortoise blood is an old South-African remedy for many complaints.

Zoos and scientific institutions have long been customers for South-African tortoises. One Cape Town dealer has shipped more than five thousand tortoises to different parts of the world.

The Cape Province is richer in tortoise species, including rare specimens, than any other similar area in the world. But each species clings to its own neighbourhood - due to the well-known lack of speed - and there is a real danger that certain interesting varieties will be wiped out.

Two years ago a Cape Town dealer took a number of specimens of the 'berg skilpad,' or mountain tortoise, to England with him and presented them to the London Zoo.

A naturalist pointed out to me that the island of Rodriguez, near Mauritius, once swarmed with huge tortoises. Seamen found them more

palatable than salt meat, and every vessel that called took hundreds away. As a result, the Rodriguez tortoise had become almost extinct. The Seychelles Islands government had protected the great elephant tortoises of Aldabra Island (weighing up to 8 cwt.), or they, too, would have vanished. Islanders still mark a young tortoise when a baby is born and sacrifice the tortoise for the wedding feast twenty or thirty years later.

Then there are the huge Galapagos tortoises from the island group in the Pacific. Men from the whalers, it is estimated, killed twenty million of them for flesh, eggs, shell or reckless sport. Two years ago the Ecuador Government proclaimed the islands as 'reserves for animal life.' Owing to scarcity value, a Galapagos tortoise now fetches £100 in London.

There is a tortoise two hundred years old in the Johannesburg Zoo. Africa's oldest tortoise, however, is Liza, of Mombasa, four hundred and fifty years old. Liza risks death by lying on the road used by motor-cars. As she is 6 feet 6

inches round the waist, most drivers see her in time. The largest South-African tortoises rarely exceed 2 feet in diameter.

On St. Helena there lives a tortoise that Napoleon gazed upon - a link with the past imported into the island early last century. Deaf, but keen of sight, the tortoise is really a relic of prehistoric times, like the rhinoceros.

II

Among the strange freight regulations of several African railways you will find an item reading: 'Giraffes measuring more than 13 feet in total height cannot be accepted for transport.'

Fairly obvious, of course. More than one captured giraffe, travelling by train for some distant zoo, has lifted its long neck at the wrong moment and met death in a tunnel or beneath a bridge. Cecil John Rhodes himself lost a giraffe that way - a splendid Rhodesian giraffe that would have looked well in his private zoo at Groote Schuur.

Giraffes are too valuable to kill. When Chief Batho sent one as a present to Queen Victoria, in

1897, it was valued at £1000. The price has gone down since then, though a wild animal dealer told me recently that he could always be sure of selling a good specimen for £200 at least.

His first expense was the licence fee - £50 in Rhodesia. Then he would have to pay expert native trackers to find a troop of giraffes. The dealer caught his specimen himself. He had been a cattle hand in the Argentine, and he knew how to use the lasso. Galloping after the troop on horseback at 40 miles an hour, he would rope his giraffe, draw alongside and fling a bag over the giraffe's head.

"It's easy after that, except the feeding," declared the dealer. "Giraffes like a diet of juicy leaves from the acacia or mimosa. The only substitute is an expensive mixture of bran, crushed mealies, molasses, semolina, pumpkin, and fruit. You must feed them properly, or they die. I once tried to insure a giraffe for a short sea voyage, and the rate quoted was £50. Now I have to take the risk myself, or the profit would vanish."

It will be a long time before Africa says farewell to the giraffe; in spite of past slaughter, there are still great troops from the Sahara south to Bechuanaland. I first saw giraffes in the open from a Congo river steamer. We had shot crocodiles (or rather aimed at crocodiles and missed) and once the ship had stopped so that the captain could bring down a sable antelope for the larder. But the giraffes aroused in us no lust to kill. These towering creatures, the tallest mammals in the world, "the most fantastic form of deer" as one old naturalist called them - these antediluvian animals seemed too tame for sport. Many a lion attacking a young giraffe, however, has felt the sledge-hammer heel kicks of the mother. It is no rare sight to find a fully-grown giraffe and a lion stretched out dead together.

Sometimes the hide of a captured giraffe will bear the scars telling of a battle it has survived - the grim marks of a 'lion's ride.' But I believe the leopard is the giraffe's most formidable enemy. A leopard will wait in a tree, spring on a giraffe's back and tear the throat open.

The giraffe relies on its marvellous eyesight to detect the approach of enemies. Its scent is only moderate, but the eyes, set in a periscope, as it were, are beautiful in appearance and highly developed. The giraffe is completely dumb. Naturalists ridicule the legend that the dying giraffe utters a weird cry. There is no vocal mechanism. Yet it is clear that giraffes are able to communicate with others in a troop, and I have heard it stated that this is achieved by signalling with the tail.

Like its cousin the camel, the giraffe can live without water for long periods. The females always retreat to the driest places when their young are born; for instinct has taught them that the lions and leopards will not follow them into the desert. Young giraffes grow rapidly, reaching a height of 10 feet within six months. I believe the maximum height, full grown, is 19 feet.

This great height may make life dangerous for the giraffe. Many have crashed into telegraph wires, become hopelessly tangled and have finally choked to death. Along the Kenya and Uganda railway line - where travellers often see

giraffes - the telegraph poles have had to be raised to prevent almost daily collisions. A few giraffes are still killed by the trains; the glare of the headlights fascinates and then blinds them as they stand between the rails.

All things considered, it is remarkable that the giraffe should remain so numerous and widely distributed in Africa. Protective colouring must have helped to save them. But the early white hunters took heavy toll, particularly in South-Africa. Giraffe hide was in demand for the long whip lashes it yielded, and the meat was always enjoyed. Bushmen hunted the giraffes of the Kalahari with bows and poisoned arrows, driving the troops northward into the swamps.

There are a couple of hundred giraffe in the Kaokoveld, the wild northern section of South-West Africa. Elsewhere in the territory, no giraffe, as a rule, is seen. I remember a police sergeant at Gobabis, on the eastern border, telling me of a giraffe mystery he had solved. Out on patrol one day he met a Bushman wearing a pair of giraffe-hide sandals, freshly made. He traced the sandals to a dead giraffe not

far away - the first giraffe he had ever seen in that corner of the country. No doubt it was a stray from the north.

Usually, the giraffe is a sociable animal, and it will graze with the antelopes and zebra when no others of its kind are in the neighbourhood. In captivity, it lives for about fourteen years; though the Pretoria Zoo had a giraffe cow from Southern Rhodesia for eighteen years. The record was established by the Antwerp Zoo, where a giraffe cow lived for twenty-eight years.

If you see a giraffe specimen mounted in a museum, you may be sure the officials are proud of it. The giraffe skin presents the taxidermist with his most intricate task. A skin alone may weigh 2,500 lb., and is extremely difficult to cure.

Alive or dead, the giraffe away from its haunts in Africa represents a large sum of money. Anyone can have a lion-skin on the floor, or a lion cub in the garden. But the giraffe, the swift, gigantic giraffe, is a prize from Africa indeed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

RARE HERDS

I

One night in the Kalahari I sat on a dusty box listening to an argument about the rarest animal in Africa. There were museum collectors and university men in the party, for this was a scientific expedition, and they knew the facts. The vote was in favour of the situtunga.

We were bound north for the swamps of Bechuanaland, where we hoped to secure a cinema record of the situtunga at home. That particular quest was in vain. Lions and crocodiles and much other wild life we encountered, but never a glimpse was there of the shy situtunga.

Many others have failed in the same mission. A living specimen of that beautiful antelope, the bongo, has been shipped to London. The delicate okapi has been sent to European zoos. But the situtunga remains unknown to the crowd - often

pursued, seldom shot, never 'brought back alive.'

There is a situtunga head in the South Kensington Museum, recently presented by Major Henry Abel Smith. It is a trophy that no museum in South-Africa possesses. In fact, Major Abel Smith's situtunga belongs to a species so rare that only a handful of white men have ever gazed upon one.

This is the situtunga we sought unsuccessfully in Bechuanaland. David Livingstone is said to have been the first white man to set eyes on the swamp situtunga; but the first record was given by the famous F.C. Selous, who shot one in the Kalahari about fifty years ago.

Since then the situtunga of the 'Limnotragus Selousi' species has been seen so seldom that it has only just missed being classed with those mystery animals of Africa which exist, but lack scientific description. This is explained by the water-loving habits of the situtunga. It lives only in swamps, and nearly always in the most inaccessible corners.

As the swamps of Africa are the haunts of the hippo and crocodile, and offer malaria and sleeping-sickness as well, the situtunga hunter must be a pretty bold specimen himself. Natives set fire to the reeds when everything above water is very dry, just before the rainy season. Beaters with spears and dogs, and men in canoes, thrust their way through the treacherous maze and occasionally they find a situtunga.

But as long as a patch of reeds or papyrus grass remains the situtunga is safe. It submerges its body like a hippo until only the nostrils remain above the surface. This trick led the old - Portuguese traveller Serpa Pinto to describe the situtunga (from hearsay) as a buck living and sleeping under the water.

Once a situtunga leaves its water sanctuary, however, it becomes one of the most helpless creatures on earth. This is due to the remarkable hoofs - the long, pointed hoofs like the prongs of a forked stick - which it has developed through the centuries to give foothold in the swamps. Sometimes the hoofs

are 7 inches in length. Otherwise the situtunga is similar in appearance to the bushbuck and kudu. It is a large antelope with black spiral horns with white tips, and a silky grey-brown coat which blends with the reeds. When you remember that it is nocturnal as well, and feeds alone, you realize why it has escaped observation for so long.

Three species have been noted - one from the Nile and Uganda swamps, another from West Africa, and the rarest of all from Bechuanaland and the Zambesi.

A sub-species may be seen on the Sesse Islands in Lake Victoria. There are not many left, however, for otters prey on the young. These island situtunga are suspected of acting as host of the tsetse fly germ which causes sleeping-sickness.

In the French Congo the situtunga is known to the natives as 'marbuli' or 'ogongo.' Major H. C. Powell Cotton secured a specimen there after many weeks on the trail. His situtunga weighed 158 lb.

A wounded situtunga, like a bushbuck, is a dangerous animal at bay. Many natives must have been killed by those long sharp horns.

I have seen both the bongo and the okapi valued at £500 a head alive in Africa. On this basis a healthy situtunga should fetch £1000, and the victorious hunter would not feel overpaid.

II

South-Africa is watching the mournful spectacle of the passing of the rare mountain zebra, described by many naturalists as the most handsome animal in the world.

This was the first of all the zebra family to be seen by white men in South-Africa. It was hunted at the Cape from the earliest years of European occupation; but it escaped the fate of its relative, the quagga, now extinct. Many years ago the Cape Government protected the mountain zebra. At that time it was estimated that two thousand remained, spread out from west to east. Yet by 1922 the numbers had been reduced to four hundred. Today there are

not more than forty, and the heartless sniper still takes toll of the doomed battalion.

One herd of fifteen mountain zebra has found sanctuary in a national park near Cradock. Unfortunately these are nearly all mares. The larger and more evenly matched herd near Oudtshoorn is protected by law; the zebras exist in numbers sufficient to encourage the hope of increase; but while poaching is allowed to continue the risk of extinction is grave.

Dealers in wild animals were issued with permits, up to a few years ago, enabling them to capture specimens of the Oudtshoorn herd alive. Men on horseback surrounded the zebras in the mountains and drove them towards prepared traps. Zebras died from exhaustion during the merciless round-up; others were dragged into the kraal and died; and the pair taken to the Pretoria Zoo died after a few days of captivity. It was a wretched affair, and it will not be repeated.

The mountain zebra was scheduled at the London Convention a few years ago as 'one of the species of African fauna whose preservation

is of special importance and urgency.' Zebras form the scientist's link between the asses and the horses. Strange to say, the mountain zebra, rarest of all, is being allowed to vanish for the lack of effective protection. They will linger on among the inaccessible Oudtshoorn mountains for a few more years. Then they will join the quagga - and the dodo.

Long ears, dewlap and the 'gridiron' pattern on the rump are the distinguishing features of the mountain zebra. It is more like the wild ass than other zebras; certainly it displays marked differences in comparison with Burchell's zebra. The mountain zebra's nearest relatives are found on the coasts of Angola and South-West Africa. The old hunter, Penrice, sent the skin of an Angola specimen to London in 1900, establishing the local race named after him. Hartmann's zebra, still plentiful in South-West Africa, is a sub-species of the true mountain zebra. Naturalists still debate the differences, but it appears that Hartmann's zebra has fewer forehead stripes, that the stripes are dark brown instead of black, with ochre bands instead of

white. Along these coasts the natives use zebra tracks as paths.

The German scientist, Zukowsky, reported a local race of mountain zebra in the remote Caprivi Zipfel (along the northern border of the Bechuanaland Protectorate) some years ago. His sole evidence, however, was a tobacco pouch made from the forehead skins of 4 Caprivi zebras. One sure method of achieving posterity is to prove the existence of a new race of zebra. Like Grevy, Crawshay and others, the name of the discoverer will be remembered in the open spaces when the zebra herds go by, black hoofs drumming, sand like a smoke-screen rising from the path of the magnificent stampede.

The mountain zebra cannot be condemned as an enemy of the farmer, for the small band of survivors prefer the heights and seldom venture into the cultivated land below. In South-West Africa, zebras do become a nuisance. They invade farms in the northern settlements, drink the precious water in the dams in dry seasons, and tear down fences. Indirectly, the zebra herds are responsible for other losses; for lions and

leopards follow them and then create havoc among flocks of sheep. Nevertheless, the government of South-West Africa protects the zebra, to the disgust of many farmers. An aggrieved delegation once suggested that the zebras should be captured, tamed and used as mounts for the police! It would have made an impressive cavalcade of uniforms and stripes.

Lions love the sweet, fatty zebra meat. Yet the sociable zebra never learns its lesson; you will see a herd of zebras grazing peacefully in the presence of lions. Ostriches, antelopes and wildebeest and zebra seem to hang together in the wild. The zebras are the first victims when lions attack.

Unrestricted shooting of zebras has been permitted in many settled areas of East Africa in recent years. Farmers and zebras cannot live side by side. The East African settlers, indeed, prefer the lion. In Kenya it was once suggested that every hunter who shot a lion should be made to produce fifty zebra hides; for lions reduce the zebra herds and thus save the corn crops.

Zebras have been tamed and trained, but never with great success. One of the sights of the Northern Transvaal in the coaching days was Zeederberg's team of zebras, broken to harness. It was found, however, that they tired too quickly. The Germans in East Africa tried to use zebras in districts where horses could not survive owing to the tsetse fly. They wasted their energy, for the ill-tempered zebras disliked harness and revealed the typical lack of stamina.

Centuries ago the gay zebras served one purpose admirably. They were sold out of Africa as curios, or sent as gifts to European monarchs. The first zebra is believed to have reached India in the sixteenth century, when the Great Mogul paid 2,000 ducats for a specimen. Long before that, zebras had galloped round the arenas of ancient Greece and Rome - the strange 'hippotigris' that must have startled thousands. Abyssinian Emperors sent many zebras away as presents. The President of France received one in 1882 - the first to reach modern Europe. Menelik presented a zebra to Queen Victoria and another to King Edward VII. These were perfect

specimens of Grevy's zebra, the North African species; but they adapted themselves for some years to life in Regent's Park.

Grevy's zebra is more easily tamed than the others. It has a different arrangement of stripes on the rump, a broad dorsal stripe, thick ears, a longer mane, and is the largest of all the zebras. The horse-like spoor, too, is distinctive. Other zebras have an 'ow-ow-ow' or 'kwa-ha-ha' call but Grevy's zebra brays like an ass. It is comparatively rare today.

Burchell's zebra is becoming rare in many parts of Southern Africa. This species (also known as the bonte-quagga) resembles the extinct quagga more closely than do the others of the tribe.

Most common of the zebras is Grant's zebra, which careers over East Africa and Uganda, often at 30 miles an hour. The stripes are narrower, forming an effective camouflage.

The African wild ass, all grey and decidedly prettier than the domestic donkey, is the last of the family still living. A small type found on

Socotra Island must have been imported from the mainland.

The quagga survived within living memory. Since the last one vanished there have been many interesting reports (which I shall describe later) of survivors in lonely places; and, as large stretches of South-West Africa remain unexplored by naturalists, it is unwise to be dogmatic on the subject. As no report has been verified, however, the quagga must be regarded as extinct.

Fiercest of the zebra tribe in the wild state, the quagga, was, nevertheless, not difficult to tame. Quaggas made delightful and useful pets. They could be interbred with the horse; indeed two beautiful horse-quaggas were often seen drawing a phaeton in Hyde Park in 1826 - a queer sight which was recorded in the newspapers of the day. Long before that a tame quagga was kept at Windsor. A quagga was presented by Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, to the London Zoo in 1858. It lived for six years. About fifteen were seen in Europe at different times. There are twenty skins and skeletons in the museums.

Broad stripes confined to the head, neck and barrel made it easy to recognise the quagga, even when zebras were grazing near-by. The quagga ran faster and with far greater endurance than the zebras. Its flesh was palatable. The hide, when treated, became silky; and dozens of tanned quagga skins with hair scraped off must still be in use in South-African farmhouses.

Dead or alive, a quagga would be worth a large sum - thousands of pounds alive, I should say - to any zoo. In the whole of South-Africa, where thousands of quaggas roamed within living memory, there is now only one museum specimen. Boer hunters shot them mercilessly for their hides, and by 1870 there was hardly a quagga to be seen on the vast plains south of the Vaal river.

‘Qua-ha-ha!’ That was the cry of the quagga and the reason for the strange name. It resembled the mountain zebra, but it was akin to the horse and the ass, too. The specimen in the Cape Town museum is a light-brown foal; but full-grown quaggas usually had reddish-brown heads and necks, with the under-body, legs and tail nearly

white. High crests and standing manes gave the quagga a stately appearance.

Many early farmers kept quaggas to protect their horses from wild dogs and hyenas at night. Pringle's poem was true of that period:

‘And the timorous quagga’s wild whistling
neigh
Is heard at the fountain at break of day.’

Rumours of quaggas in South-West Africa were heard during the German regime, and in 1913 the traveller Steinhardt reported small herds of quagga encountered in the Kaokoveld.

A later ‘rediscovery’ of the quagga was made by a mine manager with long experience of the wild life of Africa. He realised when he first sighted the herd that when he reported his find the naturalists would say that he had confused the quagga with Burchell's zebra; so he remained silent until he could arrange a trip to the same spot with several friends. It was in a lonely, mountainous area of the Namib Desert, more than

60 miles from the railway line, and far from any farm.

"On the second occasion I saw a herd of fourteen quagga at close range, and pointed out their distinguishing marks to my friends," declared the mine manager. "The quagga were lighter in colour than zebras; and most important of all, they were striped only to the shoulders. Zebras are striped all over; and a herd of zebras in the vicinity made comparison easy and certain. The quaggas, it was noted, grazed apart from the zebras."

Many stories of quaggas having been seen in distant and unsettled parts of Southern Africa reach the museum authorities. Investigation usually proves that they are mountain or other zebras.

The quagga that died in the Amsterdam Zoo in 1883 was the last of the race to be seen in Europe. Seven years later a pair of young quaggas were sold in the Pretoria market for £55. There is no record of them after that - or indeed of any other living quagga. Now South-Africa has a last chance of saving the mountain zebra.

The number which can still be counted to perpetuate the species is dangerously small. If their mountain ranges are not proclaimed a game reserve, the last hope will soon disappear.

III

South-Africa, which leads the world in the preservation of wild life, has just opened another game sanctuary to tourists. This is the Bontebok Park, near the southern tip of the continent, and about 100 miles from Cape Town. A remarkable story lies behind the enterprise.

Only a few years ago the bontebok, a fascinating antelope, almost met the same fate as the quagga and other extinct animals. It was estimated that, as a result of poaching and lack of proper protection, there were hardly more than two dozen bontebok left in South-Africa-and that meant in the whole world. The National Parks Board acted in time. About 1800 acres of veld were purchased by the government, most of the surviving bontebok were driven into the fenced area, and water was provided.

Since then the carefully guarded herd has grown to about eighty head; and at last the time has arrived when visitors may safely be allowed to drive their cars through the reserve. The rare bontebok, no longer timid, stand and stare at human beings 30 yards away.

Bontebok means pied or painted buck. It is almost a brother of the blesbok (now becoming scarce); and a cousin of the shy and coveted situtunga of the Bechuanaland swamps, and also of the famous bongo of the equatorial forests.

The bontebok has a glossy, purple-brown coat like a plum. A white patch on the rump, and a continuous white blaze down the whole face, are the only marks by which you may tell a bontebok from a blesbok. The frontal blaze of the blesbok is divided by a brown line. Naturalists regard the bontebok as the southern, and the blesbok as the northern form of a subspecies. Both fall into the same group as the much larger, fleet-footed hartebeest.

When the first Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape, the land teemed with richly-coloured bontebok. Not until a century later was the

blesbok discovered on the plains beyond the Orange River. The fact that there is no antelope representing an intermediate species proves that bontebok and blesbok never mingled in the same territory. It appears that when the large desert area of South-Africa known as the Karoo dried up ages ago, the blesbok herds in the south were cut off from the rest of their race, and in the course of centuries they developed the differences now noted. As I have said, there is no connecting link. The bontebok appears to have become a little heavier than the blesbok - a male bontebok now in the British Museum weighed 200 lb. when shot. Both have horns about 16 inches long in males, the bontebok horns showing a greenish tinge, the blesbok pure black.

The early settlers soon found that the bontebok inhabited a restricted area near the coast. But this did not prevent indiscriminate shooting, and as far back as 1836 a fine of £37 10s. was imposed by the Governor of the Cape as the penalty for killing a bontebok.

Nevertheless, the slaughter went on. The first real effort to save the vanishing bontebok was made by Mr. Alexander van der Byl, a far-sighted farmer of Bredasdorp, more than seventy years ago. Like the present authorities, he prepared an enclosure and succeeded in driving three hundred bontebok into the area. Dr. Albertyn, a neighbour, followed this splendid example. (Mr. Albertyn, the present Game Warden, is a descendant. His protests to Parliament in recent years against the poaching of bontebok by raiders in motor-cars were largely responsible for the establishment of the reserve.)

In spite of these admirable early attempts at protection, however, the bontebok herds still dwindled. Old bulls fought among themselves, droughts and lack of grazing took their toll. When the great African adventurer, Selous, visited Bredasdorp in 1895 he could find only a fraction of the three hundred rounded up by Mr. van der Byl.

It is difficult to account for the success of the present attempt to encourage the bontebok to multiply. The precious herd has been joined in the

sanctuary by other small antelope - the rhebok, duiker, grysbok, and steenbok - all worth studying in the sandy bush country near the sea.

Young bontebok appear each year in September and October. Within a week they can run swiftly enough to out-distance all but the fastest horses. Herds thirty strong may be seen from carts or motor-cars; but the bucks scamper away immediately they see a human being on foot. Like many other varieties of small antelope, they hide themselves cleverly in the grass with heads held low.

The preservation of the bontebok and the opening of the reserve support the proud boast made not long ago by Colonel Denys Reitz, Minister of Lands: "In the game reserves of South-Africa people can see more varieties of animals than in all the other continents but together."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

OUTLAWS OF THE VELD

I

Kill a baboon in South-Africa, cut off the tail as proof, and the government will pay you from 2s. 6d. to 10s. The highest rewards, of course, are paid in districts overrun by huge troops of baboons which raid the orchards, steal the mealies, mutilate lambs and young goats and carry off the chickens and poultry.

This havoc never ends. From the Equator south to the Cape, the baboon outlaws survive in settled farming areas in countless thousands, always a menace in spite of merciless hunting. Jackals and leopards take their toll of the flocks; but the widespread and indestructible baboon ranks as the South-African farmer's greatest and most cunning enemy.

Guns and dogs, traps, prussic acid capsules, baited cages are used every day in the war on these brigands of the veld. The troops are thinned out, but never destroyed. One farmer,

desperate after heavy losses, caught a large male baboon, sheared it, painted it white with red rings round the eyes and freed it in the hope that the strange apparition would drive other baboons off the farm. A really effective invention for defeating the wily baboon has not yet been devised.

It is a pity that baboon skins have no commercial value. There will be no extermination of the baboon tribe until they are hunted profitably for leather, like the wild ostriches of South-West Africa. Baboon skins have been tanned and used for boot 'uppers'; but though they wore admirably, the leather never lost its squeak. And the flesh is so bitter that only the poorest natives will eat it.

For ways that are mysterious and tricks that are cruel, the baboon heads the list of troublesome animals. A farmer who had hunted baboons for fifty years once confessed to me that he had never discovered where a troop made its base, how they communicated with each other, or what instinct enabled them to avoid danger.



PET BABOON—AMUSING ONE
DAY, TREACHEROUS THE
NEXT



WILD DOG SHOT IN THE
KALAHARI



YOUNG OVAMBO IN THE
WILDS

Baboons gouge out the eyes of lambs. They attack the young of all the game animals, and wipe out guinea fowl and partridge. Not long ago an estimate of the ravages of baboons in the Transvaal mealie lands alone revealed a loss of £275,000 a year. Native farmers suffer most severely, for they have no firearms. In half an hour a large troop of baboons will clear a field of mealies, pumpkins or melons, throwing many a cob aside after one bite.

The tragedy of the pest is that the baboon itself has few natural enemies left to prey on the marauding troops. Leopards do stalk sleeping baboons, but their appetites are not

sufficiently hearty. And the leopard does not always win. A hunter in Rhodesia once watched a baboon troop surround a leopard. Commands were barked out, the circle grew smaller, and soon the leopard was torn to pieces.

As a rule the baboon is too clever to risk death by entering the abode of man. When a woman is about, however, baboons lose their fear and become insolent. Not long ago two baboons smashed up the nurses' home, which stands apart from the hospital at Lobatsi in Bechuanaland. They had entered in search of loot, and they left the rooms with vases and chairs smashed and radio set wrecked. The most spectacular invasion in recent years occurred at the little township of Maritzani. A troop of baboons two hundred strong, driven by hunger from their mountain fastnesses, suddenly raided the outskirts of the railway settlement in daylight. Within a few minutes not a live fowl was left. Only when men rushed to the spot with guns did the baboon army retreat, muttering and grunting angrily.

Early last year a lone rogue baboon nearly 5 feet in height broke into a church in the Northern Transvaal bushveld and ransacked the vestry. The same baboon killed four sheep one night on a farm in the district, ripped the door off the school and scattered the books and broke many farmhouse windows. It was tackled by a Great Dane on one of the farms. After a short fight the dog was killed. Farmers within a radius of 30 miles gathered in an effort to end the terror, but the baboon escaped.

A wine farmer in the Cape Province once returned home to find a troop of drunken baboons chattering and quarrelling outside his cellar. He had distilled brandy that morning and left a heap of lees to dry in the sun. The baboons had consumed the intoxicating mixture. When the farmer saw their queer antics he laughed so much that he decided to allow them to lumber away. He had not the heart to fire a shot.

Baboons fear snakes more than any other living creature. Their favourite item of food is the scorpion, and they tremble nervously as they turn over the stones in search of these poisonous

insects. Otherwise the baboon is bold enough. A troop raiding a farm never retreats in disorder; they will feed until the last possible moment, and then run swiftly directly away from the approaching danger. Strange as it may seem, there is no doubt that the sentinel baboon can tell when a man is carrying a gun. The sentinel raises the alarm much later if the man is unarmed.

Troops of baboons are well organized and disciplined. Each troop, from twenty to two hundred in number, hunts in an area recognized by other packs; and 'poachers' are punished. Always there is a wise old male as leader. No one really knows the average life of a baboon, but forty-five years is an authoritative estimate. Sometimes a baboon is encountered hunting alone - an outlaw of outlaws, like an aged 'rogue' elephant.

The baboon's sense of smell is poor, but it has first-class eyesight and obviously greater intelligence than any other animal. Natives in tropical Africa believe that the baboons were once human beings who refused to work and were turned out into the wilderness. Hottentots

declare that baboons could talk if they wished, but would not do so for fear the white people would make them work!

Baboons may be tamed as pets, up to a point, but they are inclined to be treacherous. Many tales of attacks and other escapades of pet baboons are told in South-Africa. At Harrismith a Mr. de Wet du Plessis kept a huge specimen of the grey mountain baboon. It weighed nearly 150 lb. This pet appeared to be tame, except when in the presence of dogs. The baboon would simulate friendship until the dog came within its grasp. Then it would carry the victim to a cliff near the farm homestead and hurl it to death.

Several sheep were destroyed by the baboon in the same way, but Mr. du Plessis allowed his pet to live. He took the baboon for a walk one day and was passing the cliff when the baboon suddenly seized him and tried to force him over the edge.

Mr. du Plessis fought for his life, hitting and kicking the baboon and receiving a number of severe bites. He was being driven mercilessly towards the brink of the cliff, and was growing

weaker when he put all his remaining strength into a last blow. It landed on the baboon's jaw and ended the attack. After that episode the baboon was shot.

A number of pet baboons are kept in Paarl, and have provided much excitement from time to time. A few years ago a pet baboon 'ran amuck' in the main street, dashed into two churches, frightened several women, and was finally chased up the mountain and shot.

The late Oom Abraham Basson, who was Paarl's oldest resident - ninety-six years of age at the time of his death a few years ago - was stolen from his cradle by a pet baboon. He was about three months old when this adventure occurred. His mother had left the cradle in the open air, and when she returned young Abraham had vanished.

A frantic search revealed the baby in the baboon's arms on a gable of the house. Not until a favourite sweet was offered did the baboon place the baby on the roof and clamber down. The rescue was carried out hurriedly, for little Abraham was in danger of rolling off on to the ground.

Many chained baboons are made vicious by teasing, bad feeding and lack of exercise. They have been trained as 'watch-dogs,' signalmen and 'voorlopers' leading teams of oxen. Mr. Kalman Kittenberger, the East African hunter, was daring enough to train a baboon as gun-bearer.

Nevertheless, the owner of a pet baboon can never feel completely safe. The baboon, grotesque caricature of man himself, will never be the friend of man.

II

If you meet the wild dogs of Africa, shoot without mercy. Spare my lord the lion if you will, and let the cunning leopard slink away. But once you have seen the villainy of the wild dog, you will shoot until your rifle barrel is hot.

Even in game sanctuaries the wild dog is treated as an outlaw, shot at sight. It is more fierce and destructive than the coyote of America, the Australian dingo, or any hyena or jackal on the African veld. Where packs of wild dogs are, small antelope and much other game will vanish. When wild dogs invade a farm they leave scores of

maimed sheep along their trail. Wild dogs are wasteful, determined killers, creating terror wherever they roam.

I last saw a pack of wild dogs in the Kalahari. They were not pretty creatures, with their coarse hair of sandy yellow and the irregular brown and black markings. 'Lycaon pictus,' the naturalist calls them. In South-Africa they are also known as 'wilde honde,' hyena dogs and hunting dogs. You can tell them at once by their ears, large and rounded; and by their trick of jumping up, and remaining for a time on their hind legs, to watch anything that arouses their curiosity.

A fatal trick, for three of us leapt out of the car, tore the covers from our rifles, and emptied the magazines into the pack.

One dog fell. The rest, true to type, dashed away for a hundred yards and stopped again, jumping inquisitively to see what was making all the noise. Then they were away out of range, running at a speed which left no doubt of their ability to overtake the swiftest of the game animals.

I examined the fallen dog. The teeth were impressive - massive and far stronger than those of other dogs. It had a pointed muzzle, and a head not unlike that of a hyena; but the body was more shapely and suggested speed. I counted the toes - four, not only on the hind-feet, but on the fore-feet as well. Thus the distinctive spoor may be recognized from the Cape to the Sahara, different from all the rest of the dog tribe.

There is probably only one species of wild dog in Africa, though the southern packs are lighter in colour and larger. Old specimens may be almost black.

Everywhere they hunt in well-organised packs, leaders to right and left of the victim, keeping close by sight; the others racing behind by the scent. Nothing will cause them to abandon the chase. You may shoot at dogs in pursuit of a buck, but they will run on, tearing at the flanks while running. A pack will eat a small antelope in a few minutes.

Natives have told me that wild dogs show little fear of lions, and that a large pack will attack a lion. (Packs vary from five to fifty, or even a

hundred). I do not think a battle between wild dogs and lion has ever been recorded, though it is known that the dogs will tackle a leopard. Selous watched a lone wild dog pursue a sable antelope bull, and saw it driven off by the powerful horns. Even the strong wildebeeste do not treat the wild dogs lightly; they form a circle with the calves inside. Animals that will not flee from a lion will stampede madly when wild dogs appear.

One habit of the dogs enrages all hunters and travellers who have seen it. The dogs are so voracious that they will often eat their victims alive. They are cannibals, too, biting their own wounded. And when game is plentiful they always kill more than they need to satisfy their terrible meat-hunger. The lion will return to a kill. The hyena is a timid scavenger, prowling after scraps. Wild dogs kill and pass on to kill again and again.

I have not been able to find any record of wild dogs killing human beings. The Bushmen in the Kalahari are not afraid of the dogs. Nevertheless, a man who showed fear in the presence of a hungry pack might be torn to

pieces. I remember a ghastly encounter described by two mounted constables of the South-West African Police, Lyons and Ackerman, only a few years ago. They were patrolling the Eastern frontier on camels, and wild dogs suddenly attacked the camels. Lyons fell, his rifle went off, and he received a bullet in his thigh.

Ackerman, firing from time to time, kept the pack at a distance while he bandaged the wound. He propped Lyons against a tree, gave him a rifle, ammunition and water and rode off for help. Not an easy decision to make, but the right one. When he returned with a motor-car, Lyons had driven off the dogs. He was taken to hospital, and he survived.

Rewards are paid to farmers in South-Africa for destroying wild dogs. During an economy campaign in the Transvaal, the rewards were cancelled. Then the wild dogs gained in numbers, farms were raided, and the authorities decided to start paying again - 5s. for each wild dog shot, irrespective of age.

You can hear them howling and chattering at night - sinister sounds. When they are scouring the veld in huge circles after game, their rallying cries are softer, a sort of 'coo-whoop.' Occasionally you will find a litter of puppies in an ant-bear hole. But wild dogs caught in this way are seldom kept as pets. A lion cub is more friendly - and less treacherous.

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